# Early Christian Discourses on Jesus' Prayer at Gethsemane

## Courageous, Committed, Cowardly?

*Karl Olav Sandnes*

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# Preface

The story or stories about the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane, as well as his prayer to have the cup pass from him, have for some years attracted my attention and triggered my curiosity. When I in 2013 was Visiting Professor in P.R. China (Nanjing Union Theological Seminary), I took the opportunity to start delving into this topic. Here I found an opportunity to concentrate on the relevant New Testament passages, and to embark on this study. At my return from China, my own school, Norwegian School of Theology (Det teologiske Menighetsfakultet, Oslo), offered me one year Sabbatical. This made it possible to bring to a completion a project that had been close to my heart for a long time. Decisive in the preparation for this manuscript was the time I spent at Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, Rome (autumn 2014). I am grateful to Domus Internationalis Paulus IV for providing accommodation for me during this time. I owe thanks to the libraries in all the academic institutions mentioned here, in particular the library staff at my own school, who are always ready to give a helping hand.

Some colleagues have kindly read and commented on chapters of the book. I owe special thanks to Samuel Byrskog (Lund), Craig Koester (St. Paul), and my colleagues Geir Otto Holmås and Ole Jakob Filtvedt for constructive criticism which has improved my manuscript. They are not to be blamed for any shortcomings.

I am grateful to the editorial board, in particular D.P. Moessner (Fort Worth) and M.M. Mitchell (Chicago), for accepting my manuscript for this prestigious series. The anonymous reader who commented upon my manuscript also gave valuable comments and remarks, from which the final version has benefitted greatly. Finally, I offer my thanks to the staff at Brill Publishing House, especially Mattie Kuiper and Gert Jager.

*Karl Olav Sandnes*

# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ANF | Ante-Nicene Fathers |
| BDAG | Danker, F.W., W. Bauer, W.F. Arndt, and F.W. Gingrich. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3d ed. Chicago, 1999. |
| KJV | King James Version |
| LCL | Loeb Classical Library |
| LSJ | Liddell, H.G., R. Scott, H.S. Jones. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford, 1996. |
| NPNF | Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers |
| OLD | Oxford Latin Dictionary |
| OTP | *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Edited by J.H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York, 1983, 1985. |
| NETS | *A New English Translation of the Septuagint and other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under that Title*. Edited by Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright. Oxford, 2007. |
| NRSV | New Revised Standard Version |
| PG | Patrologia graeca. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris 1857–1886. |
| PL | Patrologia latina. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 217 vols. Paris 1844–1864. |
| TDNT | *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G.W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964–1976. |

CHAPTER 1

# Introducing the Topic

## 1.1 An Oxford Disputation

In October 1499, Erasmus of Rotterdam and John Colet had a public discussion in Oxford concerning the implications of Christ's agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Erasmus reported from this event some years later, summarizing in his *Disputatiuncula de taedio, pavore, tristicia Iesu* the arguments involved.[1] Questions that troubled Christianity from its very beginning resonated in this disputation. The Lukan (longer) version on Jesus' sweating blood was prominent in that debate and the dictum found more or less identically in all Synoptic versions: "... let this cup pass from me."

Erasmus argued that Christ suffered in Gethsemane as a true human being, temporarily deprived of the protection offered by his divinity. Christ assumed the frailty of humanity's natural condition and therefore dreaded death, as human beings naturally do. Erasmus claimed that this was in accordance with the evangelists themselves, consonant with the words of the prophets, and in line with the writings of the Fathers.

Colet also called upon the Fathers, especially Jerome and Origen. He argued that the agony, understood in terms of Jesus' shuddering death, was incompatible with the love of Jesus and the very purpose of his ministry. How could Jesus ask to be spared from the death that represented the culmination of his ministry and love? He had come for no other purpose than to release humankind through his death, yet he asked for his escape. The agony in Gethsemane vitiated the love expressed for example in John 3:16; he who loved the human race with passion, made attempts to escape the imminent death that formed the apex of his love for the world. Against this backdrop, the prayer in Gethsemane appears selfish and entirely out of keeping with the altruism of the rest of his ministry. It stood out as an anti-text. Jesus was rejecting what his heavenly Father wanted from him.

Furthermore, Jesus' prayer "let this cup pass from me" fell short of the martyrs' attitude when they gladly embraced their destiny. Colet referred to those Fathers who argued that Jesus' agony was caused not by a concern for

1 *A Short Debate Concerning the Distress, Alarm, and Sorrow of Jesus*. (tr. and annotated Michael J. Heath in *Collected Works of Erasmus. Spiritualia and Pastoralia* (ed. John W. O'Malley; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

 DOI 10.1163/9789004309647_002

himself and his own death, but for leaving behind the disciples; he was concerned about their fate, even Judas', and the fate of the Jews and Jerusalem. By interpreting the prayer as intercession, Colet makes the episode altruistic and thus accordant with Jesus' ministry in general.

This Oxford disputation makes it evident that the agony scene involves major theological issues that were matters of concern from the very beginning, as both Erasmus and Colet note. Both theologians stand on the shoulders of the ancient church. The present investigation aims to look into the biblical and patristic background resonating in this dispute.

## 1.2 The Present Study

The material that this investigation delves into has been prompted by an observation picking up on the point made in the dialogue discussed above, namely that the martyrs appear to have faced death more courageously than Jesus himself. In his *Stromateis*, Clement of Alexandria devotes Book 4 to the question of martyrdom: "It will follow, I think, that I should treat of martyrdom and of who the perfect man is (τίς ὁ τέλειος)" (*Strom.* 4.1/1.1).[2] Clement construes his concept of martyrdom with reference to common ideals of masculinity, Jewish and pagan antecedents, and New Testament passages. Ideals of manliness and courage run throughout Clement's treatise on martyrdom:

> We call martyrdom perfection, not because the man comes to the end of his life as others, but because he has exhibited the perfect work of love. And the ancient laud the death of those among the Greeks who died in war, not that they advised people to die a violent death, but because he who ends his life in war is released without dread of dying, severed from the body without experiencing previous suffering or being enfeebled in his soul, as the people who suffer in diseases. For they depart in a state of effeminacy and desiring to live; and therefore they do not yield up the soul pure, but bearing with it their lusts like weights of lead; all but those who have been conspicuous in virtue. (*Strom.* 4.4/14.4)[3]

Dying in war is a release from the fear of death (ἀδεὴς τοῦ θανεῖν), but it is otherwise with those who die of diseases. They fear death, hoping to survive (ἱμειρόμενοι τοῦ ζῆν) and find themselves acting like women (θηλυκευόμενοι),

2 GCS 2:248.3–4.

3 GSC 15:255. Translation taken from ANF.

weighed down by desires and in want of virtue. However, women may act like men (ἀνδρϊζομένη γυνή) by being without fear (*Strom.* 4.7/48.2).[4] It is a matter of exercising self-control (σωφροσυνή), which means to practice philosophy without *paideia* (ἄνευ γραμμάτων φιλοσοφεῖν, *Strom.* 4.8/58.1–2).[5] In other words, how to face death is philosophy in action. A virtuous life unites both barbarian and Greek, slave and old man, young boy and woman, but virtue is by nature male: "it belongs to the male alone to be virtuous, and to the woman to be licentious and unjust" (*Strom.* 4.8/59.2).[6] Manliness is a matter of demonstrating superiority vis-à-vis pleasures (*Strom.* 4.8/59.3–4).[7] In light of this context, it is obvious that the climax of pleasures is the desire to live, to cling to life. Men who do this have themselves become effeminate (καταμαλακισθεῖεν, *Strom.* 4.8/62.4).[8] In contemporary terms from discourses on *paideia* and education,[9] Clement says that it is a matter of preparing oneself (προγυμνάσματα) and striving to become "the perfect man" or the mature Christian (εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, *Strom.* 4.21/132.1).[10] He cites Eph 4:13 in his masculine construal of martyrdom: "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (KJV).

Within this discourse on manliness and martyrdom, Gethsemane texts come into play, albeit in a somewhat subdued tone. In the first place, Clement cites Matt 26:41 ("the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," *Strom.* 4.7/45.4)[11] as the tenor of martyr theology. Second, martyrdom is to imitate Christ who "drank the cup" (ἔπιεν τὸ ποτήριον, *Strom.* 4.9/75.1).[12] In the Synoptic Gospels, "drinking the cup" becomes a metaphor for Jesus' death (Mark 10:38–39), as most clearly witnessed in Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane. In the immediate

4 GCS 2:270.5.

5 GCS 2:275.5–6; cf. 4.19/118.1 (GCS 2:300.5–6).

6 GCS 2:275.12–13: ἀνδρὶ μόνῳ ἐναρέτῳ εἶναι προσήκει, γυναικὶ δὲ ἀκολάστῳ καὶ ἀδίκῳ.

7 GCS 2:275–76.14–20.

8 GCS 2:277.3.

9 Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Karl Olav Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer: School, Pagan Poets and Early Christianity* (LNTS 400; London: T&T Clark Continuum, 2009), 124–40.

10 GCS 2:306.33–307.9. On the idea of the perfect man, see Judith L. Kovacs, "Becoming the Perfect Man: Clement of Alexandria on the Philosophic Life of Women," in *Women and Gender in Ancient Religions* (ed. Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, Paul A. Holloway, and James A. Kelhoffer; Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 401–25.

11 GCS 2:268.20–21. The citation is slightly Pauline, but "the Lord said" suggests that Gethsemane is evoked.

12 GCS 2:281.31.

context, Clement cites Luke 22:31–32 on Peter's weak faith, further strengthening the link to the Gethsemane incident, since it paves the way for Jesus' instruction in the garden on how to overcome temptation (Luke 22:40–46). According to Clement, the first step to salvation is overcoming fear. Males are superior in all things, unless they become effeminate or soft. Fear of death is one of the characteristics of effeminacy.

Such use of gendered language to express moral judgments is common among ancient authors. This means that to be manly is a term of virtue. This is also witnessed lexically; the Romans associated *vis, vir,* and *virtus* (power, men, and virtue). "Becoming a man" was accordingly not taken for granted, but a matter of performance; it was something achieved, and could equally be lost. In the words of Carlin A. Barton, "a male was not necessarily a man. One was ontologically a male but existentially a man. Born a male (*mas*) or a human (*homo*), one made oneself a man (*vir*)."[13] Crucial for becoming men, or for males to be transformed into men, was the willing expenditure of oneself, even facing death willingly when necessary.[14]

Remarkably, the image conveyed in Clement's treatise on martyrdom runs contrary to Jesus' prayer that the cup may pass from him. The agony of Jesus for Clement is absorbed into his death. Hence, he says that Jesus drank the cup to purify the sins of those who plotted against him and denied him. Gethsemane is thus absorbed into his salvific death, with no room left for any agony. A third observation pertaining to Gethsemane is the emphasis on awaking from sleep, with reference to for example 1 Thess 5:6–8 (*Strom.* 4.22/140.1–141.4).[15] There is no direct reference to the Gethsemane scene, but the emphasis on sleeping, night, awakening, and temptation also resonates in that scene as rendered in the Synoptic Gospels.

It is by no means obvious that Jesus in Gethsemane must serve as an example of manliness to martyrs, as Clement takes for granted. Judged from this scene alone, it seems to be the martyrs rather than Jesus who manifested the courage associated with virtuous masculinity.[16] Such observations call for an investigation of how this incident from Jesus' life was perceived among the first Christians. In the present study, the center of attention is on the prayer and agony, not the arrest that also occurred in the garden.

13 Carlin A. Barton, *Roman Honor: The Fire in the Bones* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 38.

14 Barton, *Roman Honor*, 38–47.

15 GCS 2:310.10–30.

16 See Chapter 3 in the present study.

## 1.3 Site

Jesus in agony and at prayer in Gethsemane has been a source for various forms of Christian piety throughout the centuries. According to the tradition, this place or its immediate vicinity commemorates agony, prayer, the betrayal and arrest of Jesus, and possibly his triumphal entry, lament over Jerusalem, eschatological teaching, and ascension. A present-day visitor to the garden at the hillside of the Mount of Olives will find these events resonating in various ways in the garden itself, the cave found there, and the church built on the site.[17] Closer scrutiny of the topographical evidence reveals an early development of traditions.[18] The pilgrim of Bordeaux's itinerary of the Holy Land mentions a cliff located as one starts to climb the Mount of Olives as the place of betrayal.[19] No mention is made of the agony or prayer. In fact, the pilgrim notes that Jesus prayed on this mountain, but is referring explicitly to the transfiguration scene, not the Gethsemane episode. This cliff is most probably the one included in Emperor Theodosius' church erected in 390, the *ecclesia elegans* noted by Egeria in her itinerary (36.1) and built over the place where Jesus prayed (*ubi oravit Dominus*). She reports that at this spot liturgical processions read this passage (*ipse locus de evangelio*)[20] aloud, accompanied by hymns and prayers fitting for what happened there. The agony appears to be of low importance here; Egeria's attention is centered on Jesus at prayer, setting an example for the disciples that they should remain vigilant to avoid temptations. This picture is affirmed in Petrus Diaconus' medieval *Liber De Locis Sanctis* (On the Holy Places). Parts of this text are, however, taken from what may be lost parts

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17 The present-day All Nations Church is a modern church built in 1924 over the remains of earlier churches. See John E. Taylor, "The Garden of Gethsemane: Not the Place of Jesus' Arrest," *BAR* 21 (1995): 26–35; Max Küchler, *Jerusalem: Ein Handbuch und Studienreiseführer zur Heiligen Stadt* (Ort und Landschaften der Bibel IV.2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 810–31.

18 See *Egeria Itinerarium Reisebericht: Lateinisch und Deutsch* (ed. Georg Röwekamp and Dieter Thönnes; Fontes Christiani 20; Freiburg: Herder, 1995), 62–64, 66–69; Küchler, *Jerusalem*, 813–16. See also the text collection of John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusaders* (Wiltshire: Aris and Phillips, 2002).

19 Herbert Donner, *Pilgerfahrt ins Heilige Land: Die älteste Berichte christlicher Palästinapilger* (4.–7. Jahrhundert) (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2002), 35–67.

20 Egeria most likely has the Lukan version in mind here, since she mentions that Jesus withdrew a stone's throw away (*quantum iactum lapidis*), which is found only in Luke. However, the dictum about staying vigilant in 36.1 is closer to Mark and Matthew.

of Egeria's text, such as this line on Gethsemane: "Not far away is the place where The Lord prayed (*ubi oravit Dominus*), as his sweat turned into blood."[21]

Under the heading Gamma, Eusebius' *Onomasticon* reports that Gethsemane was the "place where the Christ (the Saviour) prayed before the Passion. It is located at (the foot of) the Mount of Olives where even now the faithful fervently utter prayers (where now a church has been built over it)."[22] The parenthesis is, however, an addition found only in Jerome's Latin translation, thus indicating that the church was yet to be built while Eusebius wrote. Eusebius distinguishes the place of prayer from the spot where Jesus was arrested, which he believes is in the Kidron Valley.[23]

This distinction is upheld by Egeria (36.3). This relatively short account of the topographical evidence reveals that Gethsemane was commemorated primarily as the place of Jesus at prayer and of his arrest. The agony is similarly not visible in the traditions. Eusebius' *Dem ev*. 6.18.23[24] firmly reinforces this impression. His brief remark about Gethsemane as the place where Jesus prayed is found within a triumphant presentation of Jesus' glory as contrasted with the view of a devastated Jerusalem seen from the Mount of Olives. Agony and fear of death do not fit easily into that description. This observation paves the way for the present project, namely the reception story of what took place on this spot and the negotiations that strive to make sense of it.

## 1.4 Approach

The Gethsemane events in Jesus' life are witnessed to in all four canonical gospels, though in different ways. The present study concentrates on the early events of the prayer and agony. These elements are narrated only in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 14:32–42; Matt 26:36–46; Luke 22:40–46), but are also echoed in the Fourth Gospel. It is part of the larger Passion Narrative, starting with the last meal or, in John, the foot-washing. The scene is, of course, linked to the arrest in Gethsemane in particular. The arrest really sets the passion in

21 My translation is based on the Latin text of Georg Röwekamp and Thönnes, *Egeria*. This line is printed in normal type, thus indicating that it is taken from Egeria.

22 GCS 3:74.16–18.

23 See *Onomasticon* under Chi (GCS 3:174.26–27). See *Palestine in the Fourth Century AD: The Onomasticon by Eusebius of Caesarea with Jerome's Latin Translation and Expansion in Parallel from the edition of E. Klostermann* (tr. G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville; indexed by Rupert L. Chapman III; ed. Joan E. Taylor; Jerusalem: Carta, 2003).

24 GCS 6.278.15–32.

motion. Jesus at prayer precedes it, but the story is driven by what follows upon the arrest.

John has altered the agony and prayer in Gethsemane considerably by having Jesus deny precisely what he asks for according to the Synoptic Gospels: "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour" (John 12:27 NRSV).[25] A complex reception of this story is emerging here, but these hints have already been seen in the synoptic versions, a fact that invites critical examination. It is the aim of this study to provide a close reading of Jesus at prayer in Gethsemane in New Testament texts, and to see how the agony and prayer are interpreted against the backdrop of ideals celebrated in antiquity in the first centuries of the Common Era.

For present-day visitors, Gethsemane is a place associated with Jesus as pious and obedient. Broadly speaking, though, this was not the case from the perspective of sources contemporary with the gospels. According to the Epistle to the Hebrews, Jesus through his death destroyed the power of the devil in order to "free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death" (2:15). This sentence may actually serve as a proper description of how Jesus himself faced death when judged according to contemporary ideals.[26] The matter of how Jesus faced death was in many ways a problem when set against the backdrop of contemporary ideals of courage or manliness and noble death. Jerome H. Neyrey lists seven primary reasons for declaring a death "noble":

1) beneficial to others
2) demonstration of virtues
3) voluntary
4) showing honor and glory, particularly in terms of manly courage
5) some kind of uniqueness
6) posthumous honors paid to the deceased
7) immortality achieved through the everlasting glory accorded to the way death was faced.[27]

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25 Unless otherwise noted, translations from the Bible and Apocrypha are from the NRSV.

26 See Chapter 4 in the present study.

27 Jerome H. Neyrey, "The 'Noble Shepherd' in John 10: Cultural and Rhetorical Background," *JBL* 120 (2001): 270–77. Some of these elements come into play in the stories about Jesus in Gethsemane. Chapter 2 of the present study addresses the idea of noble death and adds aspects that Neyrey does not discuss.

These aspects make up what noble death is about and form the bases for both interpretations from insiders and polemics from the outside.

Paul says that his Gospel was foolishness (μωρία) to the Greeks and a stumbling block (σκάνδαλον) to the Jews (1 Cor 1:23–24). In different ways these two perspectives together convey failure and a lack of bravery on the part of Jesus. Obviously, Paul's text refers primarily to the crucifixion, the heart of the Passion Narrative. The present study, however, will demonstrate that Jesus' agony in Gethsemane very likely contributed to this embarrassing picture. John Granger Cook has helpfully paved the way for such studies by looking into contemporary readings of both the Old and New Testaments in a Greco-Roman setting, thus providing an outsider's view of familiar texts.[28]

Jesus' agony in Gethsemane raises several crucial questions with respect both to how Jesus was portrayed in these passages and to how the passages themselves invoke important issues in contemporary moral philosophy. The relevant gospel stories revolve around topics such as emotions, fear and mastery of desire, death and prayer, filial piety, and obedience. According to these passages, Jesus is troubled by death and prayed for personal rescue; a humanly emotional Jesus concerned about his own well-being comes through some of these texts. We are left to examine how this fit into ideals held by contemporary philosophy. This episode thus brings together key issues pertaining to how Christian faith and the Hellenistic world interacted, but also how the agony scene triggered unresolved questions within Christian theology itself. There is no doubt that the Gethsemane scene gives an unexpected twist to the narrative by being at odds with the larger stories within which it appears. The story told in all the Synoptic Gospels has not prepared the reader for what is to happen. On the contrary, Jesus is determined and prepared for his path to suffering and passion. In the wake of this contradiction follow questions on Jesus' divine and human nature. These questions pave the way for a renewed look not only at this incident in Jesus' life but also an examination of how Gethsemane helps us understand the interaction between the nascent Christian faith and the surrounding world.

### 1.4.1 *On the Shoulders of Previous Research*

A scene of such importance in the portrayals of Jesus' life has, of course, received its due attention. This study, therefore, stands on the shoulders of much previous work on the subject. The aim of the following is by no means to give a comprehensive research history, but to point out key landmarks and

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28 John Granger Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2002).

to situate the present work within that terrain. The works discussed here will become regular partners in a dialogue with the present work, which has benefitted from them all.

In his study *Die Krises des Gottessohnes: Die Gethsemaneerzählung als Schlüssel der Markuspassion* (1987), Reinhard Feldmeier argues that in this story Mark draws on an Old Testament background. Mark's Gospel starts by stating that Jesus is the Son of God (1:1). This intimate relationship is decisive for understanding the Gethsemane story. Throughout, Mark portrays Jesus as apparently unconcerned about the death that draws near. In Gethsemane this harmonious relationship with God and his plan breaks down, as Jesus raises the question of the necessity of his death. This prayer comes out of a crisis that culminates in Mark 14:41 where Jesus realizes that God is absent and has chosen to abandon him. This leads to a paradox:

> Darin weist "Gethsemane" zugleich über sich selbst auf die Antwort Gottes,—nicht als Korrektur der Leidengeschichte, sondern als deren Bestätigung und Neuqualifizierung. Die Ferne Gottes in der Passion kann nicht die Widerlegung seines Kommens in Jesus, sondern muss dessen Vollendung sein. Das *Unheilsgeschehen selbst muss*—wenn es nach dem guten Willen des Vaters geschehen ist—Heilsgeschehen für diese Welt, εὐαγέλλιον *sein*.[29]

This makes Gethsemane ambiguous; it is simultaneously unexpected and meaningful. It is within the larger story unfolding in Mark's Gospel that the incident finds its proper meaning; cut loose from that context, it appears absurd.

Luke's version has attracted special interest due to its idiosyncrasy, notably 22:43–44. This interest found new energy with Jerome H. Neyrey's article "The Absence of Jesus' Emotions: The Lucan Redaction of Lk 22,39–46" in 1980.[30] In accordance with redaction criticism, Neyrey focuses on how Luke altered the texts available to him by removing Jesus' embarrassing emotions, which figure prominently in both Mark and Matthew.[31] Jesus is not afflicted with λύπη (sorrow), but practices ἀνδρεία (courage) instead. This parameter, which was

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29 Reinhard Feldmeier, *Die Krisis des Gottessohnes: Die Gethsemaneerzâhlung der Markuspassion* (WUNT 2.21; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 252.

30 This article has been revised in his *The Passion According to Luke: A Redaction Study of Luke's Soteriology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 49–68.

31 Comparisons between the versions found in the New Testament have naturally played a major role in the research; see for example J. Warren Holleran, *The Synoptic Gethsemane:*

so important for Clement of Alexandria, has returned to importance in recent research. Although Neyrey does not pay attention to the gendered aspects of this virtue, his study has certainly paved the way for that perspective as well. Neyrey argued that ἀγωνία (agony) does not portray a sorrowful Jesus but refers rather to Jesus displaying a tense readiness; he is on the edge of entering into not only temptation but also a victorious struggle. Neyrey accepts the authenticity of vv. 43–44, and argues that these much disputed verses are apposite for Luke's portrayal.

Greg Sterling's "*Mors philosophi*: The Death of Jesus in Luke" (2001) places Jesus within the ancient tradition of noble death, which has repercussions on how he views Gethsemane. The way Socrates faced death is a model within this tradition, which had penetrated deeply into Jewish martyr literature. In his interpretation of Jesus in Gethsemane, Sterling follows Neyrey closely. Luke's omissions indicate that the evangelist was worried about criticism that Mark's interpretation might face, which did in fact occur with Celsus.[32] Hence he "replaced what he feared some might consider a sign of physical collapse with a posture of piety."[33] Unlike Neyrey, Sterling argues that vv. 43–44 represent a later addition, caused by the concern that the absence of Jesus' emotions in this text called the humanity of Jesus into question.[34] Sterling thus argues with many scholars that these verses represent an antidocetic sentiment in the reception of Luke's Gospel.

Under Neyrey's supervision, Peter J. Scaer presented his study *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death* in 2005. He proceeds from Sterling's fundamental insight about noble death and Socrates. For Scaer, Gethsemane is subordinated to Jesus' death and passion in general:

> We see Jesus' courage in Luke's picture of him on the Mount of Olives. The portraits of Jesus in Matthew and Mark appear to run contrary to such a heroic ideal. … Such a distressed, troubled, and sorrowful person does not exhibit the courage which characterizes a praiseworthy death.[35]

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*A Critical Study* (Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana: Rome, 1973), which paves the way for considerations on sources and traditions.

32 See Chapters 4.1–4.3 in the present study.

33 Greg Sterling, "*Mors philosophi*: The Death of Jesus in Luke," *HTR* 94 (2001): 396.

34 His critical judgment of the text depends on the analysis of Bart D. Ehrman and Mark A. Plunkett, "The Angel and the Agony: The Textual Problem of Luke 22:43–44," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 401–16.

35 Peter J. Scaer, *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death* (New Testament Monographs 10; Sheffield: Phoenix, 2005), 94–95.

Within this Greco-Roman ideal of death as an inherent part of striving for virtue and courage, Scaer also emphasizes the Jewish martyrological traditions found in the Maccabean literature. Although Scaer frequently points out that courage and virtue, so characteristic of noble death, are in fact manly, the gender perspective does not really come into play in his book. Jesus' prayer in the garden marks the return of his battle with Satan (Luke 4:13). This is the struggle portrayed in the noun ἀγωνία. Jesus is an athlete and his sweat is to be interpreted accordingly; it results from the struggle of an athlete, not from anguish and agony. Scaer confirms the authenticity of vv. 43–44, as these verses fit nicely into his interpretation.

The emphasis on the Lukan version discloses a redaction critical approach rather than a discourse perspective (see below). The latter approach receives greater focus in Jung-Sik Cha's "Confronting Death: The Story of Gethsemane in Mark 14:32–42 and its Historical Legacy" (1996). After a detailed presentation of Mark's version and a more cursory presentation of other relevant New Testament passages, Cha includes relevant analogies with regard to grief and death in the Greco-Roman world, and then proceeds to how this incident was interpreted in the Church, including pilgrims' accounts and Christian art. He concludes with some considerations on the theology of Gethsemane: "The theology of Gethsemane, above all, is a theology of prayer."[36] Cha covers much ground in his study, but fails to interpret the biblical passages in a way that really integrates insight into relevant Greco-Roman material into his exegesis. In this way a discourse perspective implying an interaction between conflicting views is not as forthcoming as it might have been.

The most recent and certainly most important contribution is the magisterial work of Claire Clivaz, *L'Ange et la sueur de sang* (*Lc 22,43–44*) *ou comment on pourrait bien encore écrire l'histoire* (2010).[37] Although Clivaz' work is devoted primarily to the disputed vv. 43–44 in Luke's Gospel, she covers much ground on issues pertaining to the Gethsemane scene more generally. Her study is a milestone in any research on this incident in Jesus' life. She argues that Luke 22:43–44 are consistent with the literary context, not an interpolation. For her, these verses were rather *omitted* from Luke in second-century Egypt, so the shorter text is secondary while the longer has claims to be older. This conclusion is substantiated on both internal and external grounds. As for the latter, Clivaz argues that these verses were excised as a non-gnostic reaction

36 Jung-Sik Cha, "Confronting Death: The Story of Gethsemane in Mark 14:32–42 and its Historical Legacy" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Chicago, 1996), 375.

37 For an English summary, see pp. 619–39.

against a gnostic Christian reading of Jesus as being involved in a struggle with the demiurge as ὁ μέγας ἀγωνιστής (the champion wrestler).

Clivaz rejects the readings that claim that Jesus in Luke's Gospel is portrayed without emotions. Even without these contested verses, Luke's Passion Narrative should not be read simply as a conventional Jewish example of martyrdom or a noble Greco-Roman death. Luke 22:42 in particular displays emotions, according to Clivaz. In my view, that is an observation which is fundamental and has far-reaching consequences; it is a blow against simplistic heroic interpretations of Luke. According to Clivaz, the bloody sweat is a consequence of the intense struggle in which Jesus engages. It follows that ἀγωνία is deliberately ambiguous here and refers to both anxiety and struggle. The inclusion of the early Christian readings of Luke 22:43–44 lends a discursive perspective to Clivaz' work. There is, however, certainly more to be done by including more emphatically pagan polemics and pursuing the discourse perspective more consistently.

## 1.5 A Discourse Perspective, but Whose Discourse?

The present study is written on the assumption that discourses on Gethsemane rapidly came into being, since there was an urgent need to make sense of a story with the potential to destabilize the portrayal of Jesus as having come to bring salvation through suffering and death. Simply put, the story could be taken to sabotage the aim of Jesus' mission and ministry. The present study aims to unravel the reception in a discourse perspective.

### 1.5.1 *Real*

The discourse addressed in the present study is a mixed bag of facts and construction. Pagan polemics prove beyond any doubt that Gethsemane was an issue that triggered responses from believers, some of which are documented. Furthermore, ideals that may have been present in the general contemporary context are no proof of an ongoing discourse, but the fact that the polemics draw upon these ideals supports the view that the Gethsemane story called upon its defenders to think through their case. The differences between the gospels are indicative of more than simple alterations; John's idiosyncrasy in particular demonstrates that more is at stake here. We do not know for certain that the Fourth Gospel is engaging alternative interpretations, but it is at a minimum likely that its author was familiar with the core of this story as known

from the other canonical gospels.[38] Finally, the variances in patristic exegesis lend themselves to constructing a discourse in which they participated.

### 1.5.2 *Fictitious*

At times the sources make references to others who hold different views on Jesus in Gethsemane. These are pieces of evidence of historical disputes, as emerge for example in Irenaeus, who interprets Gethsemane against gnostic interpretations of the same texts. A contest regarding adequate interpretation is clearly present. In spite of this fact, the discourse to be dismantled in the present study is partly fictitious, since we do not know if the texts are really engaging views held by others or to what extent protagonists and antagonists show an awareness of participating in a discussion beyond their own context. It is by putting together the many sources that this discourse comes into being in the present work. Hence, the discourse is at the end of the day constructed within the present study, carefully drawn from how Jesus' emotions and prayer in Gethsemane are presented in relevant texts when seen against the backdrop of other texts. As becomes clear below, this discourse did not occur at any particular place, simply because many of the sources did not necessarily interact with other sources. Out of these many voices, this study presents a discourse or, more accurately, discourses. As for the gospels, a narrative perspective must be included since the keys to unlocking the challenges posed by Gethsemane lie in how it fits into the larger stories (cf. Feldmeier above). Rather than considering the gospels as sources drawing on each other and altering traditions, I consider them all as participating in a common discourse on Jesus in the garden. The primary aim is not to trace sources or dependencies, but to display and come to terms with the various ways in which Jesus in the garden has been presented. Seen against the background of current ideals of death and dying and manliness, this becomes a study in the encounter between Christian storytelling and the surrounding world.

In order to make visible the backdrop against which the Christian sources address Gethsemane, I delve into the pagan critique or polemic more intensively than previous scholars. While this material is not entirely absent from

38 See Chapter 8 of the present study. I endorse the view of Richard Bauckham, "John for Readers of Mark" in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (ed. Richard Bauckham; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 147–71, although I emphasize that Bauckham's description of Gethsemane as "complementing Mark" is insufficient; it is certainly more complex.

previous studies, I use this material more consistently to reconstruct a genuine dialogue on the issue. To establish this discourse, both texts earlier than the New Testament and those that follow it are addressed. The discourse perspective implies that this study's aim is to address the relevant texts as exchanges involving wider systems of thought. It is not only the differences that are important, but also the contexts or systems of thoughts within which exchanges take place. In what ways do the texts come to terms with this tradition? How is that tradition connected to theologies at large? This is, of course, a reception historical perspective, but with a difference; what theological questions became involved or affected when this episode was remembered?

Hopefully, this approach will lead to a contribution in which the material presented comes together in a more integrated way than in previous studies. In addition to a perspective on gender[39] implied in the question of death and virtue, this study also argues that the question of education (*paideia*) belongs firmly within the discourse on Jesus in Gethsemane.[40] It is not that the works discussed above are completely silent on these issues. However, it is my intention to pursue these questions more broadly and consistently, thus situating the Gethsemane episode more firmly and widely within philosophical and theological discourses.

Nevertheless, I do agree with the commonly held insight that Mark was probably the first to compose a gospel, but that does not necessarily mean that every verse in Mark is older than his peers. Some comments pertaining to the historicity of the text will, however, explain my procedure in this work. We do not have access to any source unaffected by interpretation or by coping with this event in Jesus' life. The act of remembrance is simultaneously an act of shaping and appropriating the past;[41] as James D.G. Dunn puts it, we

39 For the importance of masculinity studies in the New Testament, see for example Wen Hua Shi, *Paul's Message of the Cross as Body Language* (WUNT 2.254; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 141–51, with further references. See also Chapters 4.3 and 20.5 of the present study.

40 Several recent contributions emphasize ancient educational discourse as fundamental in shaping a Christian identity; see Peter Gemeinhardt, *Das lateinische Christentum und die antike pagane Bildung* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Judentum 41; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*; Katrin Pietzner, *Bildung, Elite und Konkurrenz. Heiden und Christen vor der Zeit Constantins* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 77; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).

41 See Chris Keith, "Memory and Authenticity: Jesus Tradition and What Really Happened," *ZNW* 102 (2011): 155–77; see also Anthony Le Donne, *Historical Jesus: What Can We Know and How Can We Know It* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011); Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (London: SPCK, 2010).

deal with "the remembered Jesus." As the pages below make clear, the question of what reliable sources this incident might have—since all those present were asleep—was already raised in ancient critiques and has been reiterated more recently.[42]

## 1.6 A Blending of Episodes?

Joel Marcus offers a very plausible formulation, namely that the Gethsemane episode is a blend of various occasions on which the disciples more than once watched Jesus gradually become frustrated with his approaching destiny and struggling with God about it. The implication is that Gethsemane probably was not as coherent an event as it appears in the gospel traditions. These experiences together formed the oldest available source of the scene, Mark's Gospel.[43] It is highly unlikely that the entire incident is made up; neither the Old Testament texts involved nor a martyrological narrative tradition account for every single element in this text. Jesus' own performance and the scandalous failure of his disciples favor continuity with a past that was troublesome to remember and thus hardly invented. This is the so-called criterion of embarrassment; however, Mark's Gospel already represents an attempt to put a puzzling event into some kind of context and thus to make sense of it.

From the outset, this episode in Jesus' life was not easily managed by those who wrote of him, as this study makes clear. It is thus of primary importance to investigate and describe the different manifestations of how they coped with their challenge. The focus must be both on Jesus' anguish before death and on his prayer to escape from that impending doom. The study has four focal areas:

– How was the fear of death, as expressed by Jesus, viewed in the contemporary world?
– Critiques and polemics directed against Gethsemane, largely pagan reactions
– The New Testament passages on Jesus' agony and prayer in Gethsemane
– The legacy of this story in early Christianity

42 See Chapter 4.5 of the present study.

43 Joel Marcus, *Mark 8–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. (The Anchor Yale Bible 27A; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 975–77; similarly in Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah. From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels Vol. 1* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 223–27.

For obvious reasons, the external critique depended on the stories about Jesus in Gethsemane. These polemics thus assume familiarity with at least some core elements of the story. A natural approach would therefore be to start with the New Testament evidence and proceed from there. In the present study, however, the approach is different; the critique will precede the text that brought it into being. Although the critique is later temporally, it is nevertheless likely that it presents attitudes and sentiments towards death and the fear of death current at the time that the gospel stories were themselves composed. The critique draws on broader contemporary ideals rather than focused complaints about the Gethsemane incident as such, which at the end of the day were likely inspired by the broader mores of the time. Proceeding in this fashion should reveal traces of these broader currencies at work in the culture or reflected in the New Testament texts themselves. If Jesus' agony and prayer became a point of departure for pagan polemics, it is likely that they were a stumbling block for many Christians as well, since they were not unfamiliar with the pagan milieu. Hence, presenting the critique first will help pave the way for new perspectives on the gospel stories.

As for the legacy of Gethsemane, there is an abiding need for limitations. The selection of texts to be investigated employs the following considerations. The texts must together form a picture that justifies even speaking of a legacy, but they are certainly various in both form and content. I draw upon texts from the second through the early fourth centuries CE. I restrict myself to texts that deal with Gethsemane in a substantial way; an exhaustive catalogue of scattered references to Gethsemane is not the target. Different genres—apologies, homilies, commentaries, treatises, paraphrases, martyr acts, etc.—are all considered; these texts together provide samples that are representative of the discourse and form building blocks for constructing what was going on with regard to Jesus at Gethsemane.

CHAPTER 2

# A Legacy of Manly Courage

The discourse on Gethsemane to be unraveled and constructed here must be seen against the backdrop of ideals on how to face death and master the desires in ancient thinking. This brings us into contact with the legacy of Socrates and Greek moral philosophy and how these ideals were accommodated in both Jewish and Christian martyr texts. Through the latter, we are of course already touching upon the discourse on Gethsemane itself among Christians.

As we have seen in Chapter 1, death and fear necessarily evoke cultural ideals and touchstones. Clement of Alexandria construed martyrdom according to contemporary ideals on death and manliness; in fact, his philosophical orientation was informed by a wider Socratic legacy. The ideals underpinning his concept of martyrdom resonate well with ideals holding pride of place in the stories about Socrates and his death: "most notably the iconic figure of Socrates, played an instrumental role in shaping ideas of self-sacrifice and noble death."[1] This chapter demonstrates that a discourse on the agony of Jesus owes much to these cultural sensitivities. In fact, pagan polemics drawing on Gethsemane rely on the mores of the time. Hence, the present chapter paves the way for Chapter 3, which directly addresses the polemics against Jesus in Gethsemane. The aim here is to provide a background against which we can understand why Jesus' agony in Gethsemane was contested in antiquity in general and why it caused disturbances within the church. This was clearly a story one had to cope with, a need that triggered interpretations and negotiations of several kinds.

The key figure in what became cultural touchstones or ideals on fear and death is Socrates, or more precisely the stories about him and the legacy that they spawned. The accounts of his disciples Plato and Xenophon formed a legacy that bears directly upon the way Gethsemane was perceived in the ancient world.[2] For the purpose of the present work, it is this legacy—not the history as

1 Candida R. Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 10.

2 The playwright Aristophanes adopts a critical attitude to Socrates in *The Clouds*, where the philosopher is portrayed as a town character to be mocked. Xenophon blames Aristophanes' satire for having led Socrates into the hands of those who killed him (*Apol.* 19C). Emily Wilson, *The Death of Socrates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) rightly addresses the legacy of Socrates' death under the title "Who Created the Death of Socrates?" (pp. 89–94).

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such—that is central to the cultural parameters about death and fear. Socrates' way of facing death epitomized ideals at work not only in polemics against the Christians, but also among the Christians themselves. Socrates has much in common with Jesus, since both faced death and reflected on the will of a deity regarding their fates. The fact that Socrates held a place of honor among many early Christians,[3] though hardly all,[4] makes it evident that his portrayal in antiquity is perfectly relevant for understanding the agony in Gethsemane. The confrontation with death is one element where a comparison of the Son of God with the philosopher brought with it real complications rather than easy affirmations for those eager to view the two figures as more or less equal. The account of Socrates' trial and its aftermath are recorded in both Plato and Xenophon, who serve as our starting points, especially Plato. The Socratic legacy departs from Plato's dialogues *Crito* and *Phaedo* and Xenophon's *Apology* and a short report on Socrates' death in his *Memorabilia* 4:8.1–4.[5] At the end of this chapter we will see how this legacy was perpetuated more or less independently of the specific stories about Socrates.

## 2.1 Plato's *Crito*: "Saving Oneself"

The narrative framework for this dialogue is that Crito pays a visit to Socrates in his prison cell early in the morning (43a–b). Finding Socrates asleep, Crito says to him that he has been watching "how sweetly (ὡς ἡδέως)[6] you sleep" (43b). This marks a strong contrast to Crito, who finds himself in turmoil (ἐν…ἀγρυπνίᾳ καὶ λύπῃ). Crito takes the pleasant sleep as indicative of his friend's calmness in the situation. From a narrative perspective, the pleasant sleep of Socrates contrasts with the wild emotions of Crito, whose main concern is clinging to life at almost any cost.

3 The literature on Socrates' role in the early Christian tradition, or even within the New Testament alone, is nothing short of immense; see for example Ernst Benz, "Christ und Sokrates in der alten Kirche (Ein Beitrag zum altkirchlichen Verständnis des Märtyrers und des Martyriums)," *ZNW* (1950–51): 195–224; Klaus Döring, "Exemplum Socratis: Studien zur Sokratesnachwirkung in der kynisch-stoischen Popularphilosophie der frühen Kaiserzeit und im frühen Christentum," *Hermes* 42 (1979): 143–61; Paul W. Gooch, *Reflections on Jesus and Socrates: Word and Silence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). See also Arthur Droge and James D. Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide, and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), 17–51 and Wilson, *The Death of Socrates*, 141–52.

4 See for example Pseudo-Justin, *Hortatory Address to the Greeks* 36 (ANF 1:288).

5 Unless otherwise specified, references are taken from the LCL editions.

6 The adjective ἡδύς means pleasant; see LSJ s.v.

Here in the introduction of the dialogue we already have a narrative glimpse of the philosopher's attitude to his impending death and the ideals looming large in the dialogue. The sleeping Socrates is contrasted with his upset and deeply distressed friend Crito, all summarized in the term λύπη ("sorrow"), which also figures prominently in the narrative garden traditions about Jesus. Crito brings news that the fateful arrival of the ship from Delos has been announced (43d–44a). Upon its arrival Socrates is to die according to the judgment of the Athenian tribunal.[7] The tranquility of Socrates asleep is emblematic of the ideal of not succumbing to fear, grief, or emotions.

### 2.1.1 *Death: A Matter of Discernment*

The two friends immediately engage in a discussion on the topic of our interest. Socrates says that, due to his age, it would be absurd (πλημμελὲς) of him to be disturbed (ἀγανακτεῖν)[8] that his death is at hand. To this Crito responds: "Other men as old, Socrates, become involved in similar misfortunes, but their age does not at least prevent them from being disturbed by their fate" (43c). For Socrates, however, this argument is foolish or absurd. Plato's *Laws* 689a–c helps explicate Socrates' outlook; in that passage, the Athenian, a figure resembling Socrates, asks what kind of ignorance is to be considered the greatest: ἡ μεγίστη ἀμαθία. His answer brings out two closely related but nonetheless different aspects of this greatest ignorance. The first is the lack of consistency between words and deed. A person of reason (κατὰ λόγον) manifests a fundamental consistency between words or convictions and actions. This is not so with ignorant people, whose lack of *paideia* paves the way for feelings or emotions to dominate, so that pain (λύπη) and pleasure (ἡδονή) prevail. This is the final proof of their lack of learning. It is notable that λύπη, together with "desire" (ἐπιθυμία), "pleasure" (ἡδονή), and "fear" (φόβος) are reckoned among passions that are to be mastered. Such ignorance appears in an individual when the inferior part of the soul prevails over reason and in the state when the laws are overwhelmed by the masses. Both aspects apply to the situation of Socrates as he awaits execution. The coherence in Socrates' life is also a key to understanding why Socrates is obliged to abide by the verdict of the state. For the Athenian of the *Laws*, not to abide by them is the most outrageous folly

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7 The legend behind this ship is explained in *Phaed.* 58a–c and Xenophon, *Mem.* 4.8.2. Due to religious observance, Athenians would not partake in any public execution until the sacred ship returned from Delos.

8 This Greek verb refers to being vexed or displeased; it often refers to showing outward or bodily signs of grief; see LSJ s.v. A good example is *Phaed.* 117d, about the women's grief at Socrates' prison cell (see below).

or lack of learning (ἀμαθία). Thus the question of emotion, and how to face death in particular, becomes an issue of discernment, education, mastery of pleasures, and correspondence between soul and conduct.[9]

Crito arrives with the intention of discussing plans to escape prison, hoping to save his friend from death. His plan is introduced in *Crito* 44b and sets the agenda for the dialogue until Socrates responds by presenting his final arguments for refusing the plans, starting in 46b. Crito has collected the necessary sum of money to save Socrates; bribery appears crucial to his plan. Throughout this section of the dialogue, Crito speaks in terms of "saving" (σε σῴζειν) Socrates, and of his "saving himself" (σαυτὸν σῶσαι). Crito argues that he is about to lose a unique friend and that Socrates is leaving his children orphans without their guardian and educator. To them, he is choosing the laziest way. Crito even says that Socrates is about to betray himself, since his death is exactly what his enemies have planned for him.

Crito's main argument is grounded in the ideal of friendship. Beneath it lie the expectations of an ideal friend, sharing the fate of a friend, helping him out, and running risks to provide the necessary help, even to the point of risking his own death.[10] If Crito and Socrates' friends fail to save the philosopher, people will consider them cowards without the courage of true men (ἀνανδρία, 45e–46a), Crito notes. Furthermore, they will think that they are more concerned about their money than saving a friend from death: "what reputation could be more disgraceful than that of considering one's money of more importance than one's friends?" The friends are willing to run the risks (κινδυνεύειν) involved in the escaping project. Crito pleads with Socrates to embrace the plan without delay, but Socrates remains firm. From the argument of friendship that lies at the heart of Crito's position, Socrates' refusal implies that the issues involved in his situation must take precedence over even the ideal of friendship from which Crito reasons.

The entire dialogue is construed as a Socratic debate (*elenchus*) on the question of saving oneself from a death brought upon by the laws of Athens. Socrates' situation thus becomes a framework for a philosophical discussion

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9 That *paideia* is intimately connected with exhibiting masculinity has been demonstrated by Meriel Jones, *Playing the Man: Performing Masculinities in the Ancient Greek Novel* (Oxford: Oxford: University Press, 2012), 20–91.

10 Lucian of Samosata's story *Toxaris* is very illuminating here. Lucian writes of two friends, one of whom is imprisoned. The other friend manifests the ideals of true friendship through measures like bribing the guards to release his friend; see Karl Olav Sandnes, *A New Family: Conversion and Ecclesiology with Cross-Cultural Comparisons* (Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity 91; Bern: Peter Lang, 1994), 171–75.

on death and fear. This means that the core of this dialogue foreshadows directly the issues around Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane: saving oneself or following the will of deity. Socrates closes Plato's *Crito* by saying: "Then, Crito, let it be; and let us act in this way, since it is in this way that God leads us" (ἐπειδὴ ὁ θεὸς ὑφηγεῖται, 54e), which recalls what he said to Crito at the very opening of their dialogue: "if this is the will of the gods, so be it"[11] (43d).

### 2.1.2 *Living Consistently*

In *Crito* 46b–c, Socrates starts his final response by saying that it is time to examine whether they ought to do as Crito wishes. The philosopher employs a two-point argument, with the second subordinated to the first and more important argument. The two arguments are that Socrates, as a man who follows nothing but his reasoning (ὁ λόγος) is to *abide* with his reason, even when confronted with death. He claims to have done so himself "not only now, but always." From this it follows that he must abide by the verdicts of the Athenian state. A man of reason and learning does not alter his practices and attitude for circumstances. For seventy years Socrates has complied with the regulations of the state. Should he abandon that fundamental consistency in his life when the strictures of that same state go against him? Being a man of consistency, Socrates is not about to make decisions subject to contingent situations. He asks Crito rhetorically if they were right before he was condemned to death. Was all they previously did and thought only for the sake of argument? Was it all mere play and nonsense (παιδιὰ καὶ φλυαρία, 46d)? Implied in these questions is that there is no need to change or alter their previously held views and that the present situation thus should not lead their judgment astray. Crito's escape plan is, in fact, a betrayal of their former life together, and hence undermines the principle of living in consistency between past and present, between words and conduct: "Our argument (ὁ λόγος) so (οὕτως) constrains (αἱρεῖ)[12] us," says Socrates (48c).

Fundamental to Socrates' view is that people of reason cope with moments of distress in accordance with how they have previously conducted their lives. Doing otherwise suggests an abandonment of reason in favor of pleasures, as the argument in *Phaedo* makes evident (see below). From *Crito* 50a through the end of the dialogue, Socrates argues that obedience to the state is necessary in order to keep its regulations valid. The common good, here represented

11 The Greek text is τύχῃ ἀγαθῇ, εἰ ταυτῃ τοῖς φίλον, ταύτῃ ἔστω.

12 The verb αἱρέω has the meaning of seizing or grasping; it might also take on the meaning of taking someone by the hand or leading; see LSJ s.v. Both connotations support the point made by Socrates.

by the state, is thus superior to that of the individual. People of reason cannot only accept the decisions with which they agree. In this part of *Crito*, Plato imagines a dialogue between the philosopher and representatives of the state, who argue that Socrates would become a "destroyer of the law" by not accepting the judgment made by the state and thus confirm the accusations leveled against him.

In *Crito* 53c and e, the state raises the most fundamental accusation against Socrates, if he were to follow the advice of Crito and his friends. The first critical question is a development of the main argument about consistency: if Socrates now escapes, how can he be trustworthy when he has all his life claimed that virtue (ἡ ἀρετὴ) and justice (ἡ δικαιοσύνη) and lawful things (τὰ νόμιμα καὶ οἱ νόμοι) are the most precious things to people? In this argument we see that the divine will, which Socrates claims to follow, is about virtue and law and therefore leads him to obey the state as well. The second critical comment is that people will say that Socrates "clung to life with such shameless greed (οὕτω γλίσχρως[13] ἐπιθυμεῖν ζῆν) that you transgressed the highest laws." Socrates would now be pleasing himself, yielding to the passions. His old age, of course, aggravates this accusation. Socrates would then "live as an inferior and slave to everyone." Thus runs the argument of the state; Socrates embraces this line of thought, in which consistency is so important.

## 2.2 Plato's *Phaedo*: Emptying the Cup

This dialogue features the answers given by Phaedo, who was present at the death of Socrates, to his friend Echecrates' questions about the details of what happened (*Phaed.* 57a). Phaedo's first and short reply is that Socrates appeared happy (εὐδαίμων), and that he met death fearlessly (ἀδεῶς) and nobly (γενναίως, 58e):

> For my part I had strange emotions when I was there. For I was not filled with pity as I might naturally be when present at the death of a friend; since he seemed to me to be happy, both in his bearing and his words, he was meeting death so fearlessly and nobly. And so I thought that even in going to the abode of the dead (Hades) he was not going without the

13 This adverb and its cognates are related to being sticky; see LSJ s.v. In *Phaedo* 117a, the participle γλιχόμενος τοῦ ζῆν is used in the same way. Socrates sees no use in delaying the poisonous drink just to live a little longer; he does not cling to life.

> protection of the gods, and that when he arrived there it would be well with him, if it ever was well with anyone. (*Phaed.* 58e–59a [Fowler, LCL])

Socrates was confident that something good was in store for the wise person.[14] A vague hope about some future good (μέγιστα ἀγαθά) beyond death is implied in 63c–64a, giving him courage (θαρρεῖν) not to be troubled (ἀγανακτῶ); hence, he says about himself that he is of good hope (εὔελπίς εἰμι). Those studying philosophy rightly, Socrates says, study nothing but dying and death, since philosophy is nothing but a preparation for death. It is, therefore, entirely out of place (ἄτοπον) to be distressed when that for which one has practiced and prepared oneself one's entire life finally arrives. Consistency throughout life, not wavering according to changing circumstances, is a key argument here.

### 2.2.1 *Enslavement to the Body*

A considerable part of *Phaedo* aims to show that fear of death follows from a basic misconception of the human body.[15] Death is the separation of the soul from the body, and pleasures and emotions belong to the body rather than the immortal soul. A philosopher devotes himself to the soul and despises the body: "the body fills us with passions and desires and fear, and all sorts of fancies and foolishness" (ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ φόβων καὶ εἰδώλων παντοδαπῶν καὶ φλυαρίας ἐμπίμπλησιν ἡμᾶς πολλῆς, 66c), thus enslaving people (ἀναγκαζόμεθα κτᾶσθαι διὰ τὸ σῶμα δουλεύοντες τῇ τούτου θεραπείᾳ, 66d). Most readers will be familiar with the biblical notion of the noun εἴδωλον ("idols"), but the term has a wider reference to that which has no real existence; it refers to images, often produced only in the mind.[16] Hence, it means "phantom" and is thus at home in charges of superstition. Its appearance here together with φλυαρία confirms this interpretation, since that noun refers to what fools accomplish and is in *Crito* 46d associated with mere play in contrast to real things (see above).

Fear is thus listed among passions contrasted with the philosophical mind. Death is the final release from bodily desires and emotions and the philosopher prepares himself by avoiding bodily needs, including fear, as much as possible (*Phaed.* 67a, d). The soul and the body relate as ruler to ruled; the soul is divine and fit for ruling, while the body is mortal and fit to obey and serve. Hence, fear of death becomes an example of fleshly desires and the highly pejorative

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14 The philosopher's last words in *Apol.* 42a appear less certain in that regard: "But now the time has come to go away. I go to die, and you to live; but which of us goes to the better lot, is known to none but God."

15 See for example 64b–68b; 80ab; 81b; 82c–e; 100c; 105e; 106e.

16 See LSJ s.v.

accusation of gluttony (γαστριμαργία, 81e; 82e). From the description of being enslaved by the needs of the body, the accusation of belly devotion comes as no surprise, as the stomach is seen as the place within the body from which pleasures and greed arise.[17] The ideal of death held by Socrates thus follows closely from the anthropology of this text.[18]

### 2.2.2 *"Ethical" Physiognomy*

This anthropology can be turned into a weapon directed at others, as indirectly occurs in *Phaed.* 68b–c: "Then, is it not, said Socrates, a sufficient indication (τεκμήριον), when you see a man troubled (ἀγανακτοῦντα) because he is going to die, that he was not a lover of wisdom (φιλόσοφος), but a lover of the body (φιλσώματος)?" Harold North Fowler's LCL translation of τεκμήριον as "indication" is too weak to capture the true meaning of this statement. Τεκμήριον is at home in both rhetoric and physiognomy; it denotes a necessary or irrefutable proof, as opposed to "sign" (σημεῖον), which is a term for a tentative or probable proof used in physiognomic literature.[19] The way Socrates speaks here makes philosophy a source of morality and indicates that attitudes reveal the true nature of the mind. His twist on received physiognomic theory here is important. Plato displays an "anti-physiognomic strain to his thought,"[20] with the outward manifestation of Socrates himself being the exemplar. While Plato abides with the fundamental reasoning of physiognomy, namely that virtue or

17 On the rhetoric of the stomach, see Karl Olav Sandnes, *Belly and Body in the Pauline Epistles* (SNTSMS 120; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 24–96.

18 This dualistic anthropology is also the reason that he blames Crito for the latter's concern about the funeral (115e).

19 See LSJ s.v. On physiognomy in general, see *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam* (ed. Simon Swain; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), which also offers text editions and translations. See also Karl Olav Sandnes, "Christian Baptism as Seen by Outsiders: Julian the Apostate As an Example," *VC* 66 (2012): 511–12; Julian combines physiognomy and the lack of *paideia* in his critique of Christ and Constantine. Michael C. Parsons, *Body and Character in Luke and Acts: The Subversion of Physiognomy in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2006), 17–48. Parsons investigates relevant texts in Luke and Acts, but does not mention Gethsemane at all. If one does not focus exclusively on the bodily signs, but also includes the ethical types that the art of physiognomy did in fact aim to identify, then Jesus' performance in Gethsemane is indeed relevant here.

20 George Boys-Stones, "Physiognomy and Ancient Psychological Theory" in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam* (ed. Simon Swain; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 34.

vice will manifest themselves externally, he does question the bodily signs and instead turns to actual behaviors.

Plato's outlook means that the attitude taken in situations that might cause fear becomes an index of how a person is to be judged philosophically and morally. This recalls the insight from *Crito* that people suffering from fear and other vices lack proper insight; they are unlearned. Furthermore, such people are likely to become lovers of money, honor, and other means of pleasing themselves. The argument accords well with physiognomic theories, though with an important modification. Although the body as such is not an index here, it is clearly the outward manifestation of inner feelings that is of concern, a fact that clearly brings to mind this way of reasoning. Being a lover of the body brings out the stomach-critique, epitomizing selfishness, indulging in the body, and the inability to control the desires.[21]

Courage or manliness (ἀνδρεία), self-restraint (σωφροσύνη), not being excited by passions (τὸ περὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας μὴ ἐπτοῆσθαι) but being superior (ὀλιγώρως) to them, and thus living an orderly well-behaved life characterized by moderation (κοσμίως)[22] become characteristics of the true philosopher (*Phaed.* 68c; 69b; 114e–15a). A soul that is philosophically nurtured will not be torn asunder (μὴ φοβηθῇ) as its departure from the body draws near (84b). People of reason will not surrender to ἡδονή and λύπη. The way that pleasure and bodily fear are discussed together captures Socrates' argument in *Phaedo*. Fearing death is equal to pleasure-seeking and may be the very peak of selfishness, since it is the passion to live. Peace from emotions can only be gained by following reason (λογισμός) and by abiding with it at all times (84a). The philosopher is not like Penelope unweaving the web she wove; at night she undid what she had created by day. This famous and iconic Homeric story (*Od.* 2:93–105) serves the purpose of pointing out that a philosopher abides by his convictions throughout life.[23]

### 2.2.3 *Emptying the Cup*

*Phaed.* 117a–c reports that Socrates emptied the cup of hemlock. The term used for cup is here κύλιξ, and the verb used for drinking is πίνω and its cognates. His friends were crying (117d–e) as the philosopher drank. He, however, chastises them, saying that he sent the women away (116b) to avoid precisely this

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21 Dio Chrysostom equates being enslaved to the pleasures of "loving the body" (φιλοσώματος, *Or.* 4.15).

22 See LSJ s.v.

23 In fairness, Penelope's actions are far more strategic than representative of a lack of commitment, as Plato insinuates here.

eventuality. Women's inability to comply with the philosophical mind that is in control—so crucial to the argument of this dialogue—is visualized in Xantippe's wailing (ἀνευφημέω) and beating her breasts (ἄττα εἶπεν) as women always do, according to *Phaed*. 60a. The first verb refers to shouting or crying loudly. Socrates blames his friends for acting like women; the gender aspect is crucial to how cowardice is perceived. Socrates urges them to keep "quiet and be brave" (ἡσυχίαν τε ἄγετε καὶ καρτερεῖτε[24]). This command follows upon the philosopher's dictum that it is necessary to die in silence (εὐφημίᾳ[25] χρὴ τελευτᾶν, 117c–e). Accordingly, Phaedo also emphasizes that Socrates emptied the cup cheerfully and εὐκόλως, which here must be rendered "calmly."[26]

The story closes by noting that Socrates' friends were ashamed and brought their tears under control, thus manifesting physically the philosophical focus of the dialogue. Their final hours with their master continued their education and they have now reached true insight, so their tears cease. Although the topic is highly philosophical, *Phaed*. 99a makes it evident that the dialogue must be understood against the backdrop of attempts to convince Socrates to escape captivity and the prospect of death. These are the plans that triggered this piece of philosophy about death and fear.

## 2.3 Xenophon's *Apology* and *Memorabilia*: Dying Nobly

Xenophon says at the beginning of his *Apology* that others have written about Socrates' defense and death, but they have not sufficiently shown that for Socrates "death was more to be desired than life" (1). He refers to Hermogenes, who was present at these occasions and had informed Xenophon that Socrates considered it of no use to prepare any defense, since his whole life had prepared him for exactly what was soon to come. The continuity and consistency emphasized by Plato is reinforced by Xenophon. Socrates did not change his ways at the moment of death; he abided by his previously held attitudes (3). From §22 on, Xenophon turns directly to Socrates' death, which he describes very briefly. Socrates did not beseech the jury to escape death. Neither did he accept any such suggestion from his friends; instead he asked them "whether they knew of any spot outside of Attica that was inaccessible to death," thus

24 According to LSJ s.v. this verb and its cognates mean to endure, be patient, or persevere.

25 This word refers to the quietness that is appropriate when dealing with the gods. In Euripides' *Iphigenia* 1564 it is used synonymously with σιγή, the common term for silence. LSJ s.v. uses "in silence" here.

26 Thus LSJ s.v.

implying that escape would only be a matter of delaying death (23). When some in his company started weeping as they left the tribunal, Socrates told them that he was condemned to death from the moment of his birth (27). In fact, he was in a good mood.

The well-known story[27] about Apollodorus, one of his students, is illustrative. He exclaimed: "But what I find hardest to bear is that I see you being put to death unjustly!" to which the philosopher responded with a smile: "My beloved Apollodorus, was it your preference to see me put to death justly?" In *Apol.* 33–34, Xenophon sums up his view on how Socrates faced death. He displayed the strength of his soul (τῆς ψυχῆς τὴν ῥώμην) and was not weakened (ἐμαλακίσατο) as death was drawing near. The verb μαλακίζομαι means to be softened, feminized, or to act as a coward. The preference for a masculine perspective is clearly present in this term.[28] Socrates was cheerful (ἱλαρῶς)[29] in meeting death. Finally, Xenophon praises him for his wisdom, nobility (γενναιότης), and for being worthy of being the most happy (ἀξιομακάριστος).

In his *Memorabilia* (4.8.1–11), Xenophon offers another account of Socrates' death. From 4.8.3 on, the text more or less echoes his *Apology*, but there is important insight in 4.8.1–3. Xenophon takes his point of departure from the fact that, due to his age, Socrates would soon have died anyway. He thus escaped the most irksome stage of life, instead winning himself glory through his defense and the equanimity (πραότατα) and manliness (ἀνδρωδέστατα) with which he faced death. The two superlatives are clearly meant to praise Socrates. According to Xenophon, there is no record of a more noble or beautiful death (κάλλιον θάνατον, 2); he asks in 4.8.3 if a more beautiful death is even possible. While he was waiting for the arrival of the ship from Delos, which meant that his execution was approaching, Socrates "continued to live exactly as before," honored for his cheerfulness and serenity or calmness (εὐθύμως τε καὶ εὐκόλως ζῆν). Of course, the key is that Socrates lived this way to the very end of his life, unchanged and unaffected by circumstances (2). Consistency encapsulates the ideal that is to be manifested even, or perhaps especially, at the time of death.

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27 See Theon's Chreia 143–44; *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric Volume 1: The Progymnasmata* (ed. Ronald F. Hock and Edward N. O'Neil; SBLTT 27; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 90–91.

28 LSJ s.v.

29 This is a term for a merry or happy situation. Paul uses this term in 2 Cor 9:7 in contrast to λύπη ("sorrow").

## 2.4 Socrates and Gethsemane: Some Preliminary Observations

In *Reflections on Jesus and Socrates* (1996), Paul W. Gooch notes regarding comparisons of Jesus and Socrates that "[t]he place from which comparison is made, therefore, is our own place and neither of theirs."[30] At one level, this is simply obvious; it was not a comparison that mattered to Jesus, but it certainly did to some of his later followers, especially those among the elite. Nonetheless, Gooch's statement may also be read to imply that this is a purely academic comparison conducted by today's scholars. The present volume, however, argues that comparing Jesus to Socrates is more than a modern endeavor; it is certainly relevant to how Jesus was seen not only by foes, but also by friends.

In her book *The Death of Socrates* (2007), Emily Wilson says the following about Socrates and Jesus:

> The danger, for a Christian author appealing to an audience familiar with the death of Socrates, is that Jesus' desire to have the "cup pass from him" may seem to compare unfavourably with Socrates' willingness to drink the hemlock. Luke is the only Gospel writer to confront this issue. He solves the problem by an angel: after Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, Luke tells us, "there appeared an angel from heaven, strengthening him."[31]

The present study proceeds from the initial observation in this citation but differs with the second part. Luke is not the only Gospel to confront how Jesus differed from Socrates and his legacy; to various degrees, the issue is present in all available narrative accounts, starting with Mark's Gospel. Furthermore, it is not evident how the strengthening angel in Luke's longer version serves to fill an apparent gap between the philosopher and Jesus. To Julian the Emperor (see below), for example, it is precisely the appearance of the angel that proves Jesus to be a failure.

Socrates embodies a legacy of death and fear in the ancient world, having faced death courageously and without being disturbed in any way. He demonstrated no sign of distress or struggle about his fate. From beginning through end he was fully reconciled to his fate; there is not the slightest hint of a wish to escape. He thus manifested a trustworthy consistency until the very end, not altering his attitude when circumstances changed. His consistency has a dual nature; he acted in accordance with his words, and did so through the very

30 Gooch, *Reflections on Jesus and Socrates*, 13.

31 Wilson, *The Death of Socrates*, 143.

end, even at the moment of death. Consistency applies to conduct (words and deeds) as well as to time (throughout life). Wavering reveals a lack of wisdom.

As a learned man nurtured by wisdom or philosophy, Socrates knew that bodily pains and pleasures were secondary to the soul and even enemies of the true philosophical life. Plato's dialogues on this question outline Socrates' notion of a soul ruling the body and its needs. Fear generally, and fear of death in particular, is listed among the vices of foolish people who have submitted themselves to the body and not to the soul. Fear is therefore one of the passions and desires that philosophy aims to bring under control, because it is an irrational passion, selfish in nature. It follows that fear and fear of death serve as a physiognomic index revealing the level of a person's soul. The step from physiognomic descriptions to ethical types such as the brave, courageous, effeminate, and the like is indeed minor.[32] The harmonious body[33] coincides with harmonious actions and attitudes, as Socrates demonstrates by staying calm, sleeping peacefully, and remaining silent. There is a marked difference from how physiognomic literature portrays the effeminate:

> You may recognize him by his provocatively melting glance and by the rapid movement of his intensively staring eyes ... loins do not hold still, and his slack limbs never stay in one position. He minces along with little jumping steps (Ps.-Polemo 2.52.415–16 ed. Foerster Vol. 1).[34]

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32 Parsons, *Body and Character*, 26, 31–34.

33 The physical appearance of a courageous person is described thusly: "He whose feet and hands move in harmony, with all the rest of his person, who moves forward with shoulders calm and carefully controlled, with his neck but slightly inclined—he is the one whom men call brave and magnanimous (*manganimum hominem dicunt et fortem*), for his is the walk of a lion" (*De physiogn.* 76.99–100; ed. Foerster Vol. 2; cf. Polemo 50.262 (*magnificientiam audaciam et strenuitatem adiudica*); ed. Foerster Vol. 1. Translation from Parsons, *Body and Character*, 33; see also Ian Repath, "Anonymous Latinus, Book of Physiognomy," in *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam* (ed. Simon Swain; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 604–605. These theories are played out in full in Clement of Alexandria's *Paedagogue*, as in 3.11: "A true gentleman (ἀνδρὸς δὲ γενναίου) must have no mark (σημεῖον) of effeminacy (μαλακίας) visible on his face, or any other parts of his body. Let no blot on his manliness (ἡ ἀσχημοσύνη τῆς ἀνανδρίας), then, ever be found either in his movements or habits (*Paed.* 3.11.73–74; GCS 276.27–277.2; ANF 2:289). In this passage, Clement groups external appearance with posture, habit, or way of life; see LSJ s.v., thus confirming that ethical and physical aspects are intertwined.

34 Translation from Parsons, *Body and Character*, 33; see also Repath, "Physiognomy," 544–45. To Galen, the physician who also was a philosopher (see Chapter 2.5.3 of this study), physiognomy naturally played an important role. The long standing concern with grief

This is certainly a person, be it man or woman, who is wavering and lacking in consistency and firmness. Thus, not only was the body a sort of voice of the soul, but also a harmonious attitude when facing a crisis was a voice of the soul, providing evidence of manliness or its lack, of learning or its opposite.[35]

Plato's *Crito* portrays Socrates asleep, thus giving a vivid picture of his profound tranquility in this situation. Crito, his friend, is unable to sleep and represents the wish to escape and save oneself in the face of death, but he is also the one rectified and corrected in this dialogue. He needs Socrates' instruction, which he finds in his company as the philosopher prepares for his death. In the end (54e) Crito thus offers nothing in reply when his teacher says that this is the divine way that must be followed. In *Phaedo*, Xantippe and some unnamed women serve a similar contrasting role. They cry loudly, as the dialogue says women usually do; hence they are sent away. No philosophical cure is available for them, as it was for Crito in the end. As women they remain lovers of the body, without the instruction necessary to appease their fear. In these dialogues, manliness in terms of controlling fear is available to men alone.[36]

We have here uncovered what are important building blocks in the critique of Jesus' agony in Gethsemane. One need not speculate excessively to imagine how this picture or ideal comes out if applied to Jesus' performance according to the narrative accounts. Such a comparison is not a purely academic exercise, because it is precisely against this backdrop that some Christians of the first generations read the story about their hero. The Socratic legacy formed a cultural ideal more or less independent of the philosopher himself. When in Gethsemane, Jesus prayed for exactly what Socrates refused to consider at all, to escape or to be saved. Jesus' prayer as rendered in the Synoptic Gospels—even in Luke (22:42)—echoes in essence the nature of Crito's argument in favor of seeking an escape for Socrates.[37] Some important parallels and contrasts must be noted. This comparison proceeds from Gethsemane as it appears is the Synoptic Gospels generally; important differences among the versions are discussed later.

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and emotions in physiognomic treatises is very much present in Galen's writings; see John T. Fitzgerald, "Galen's *De indolentia* in the Context of Greco-Roman Medicine, Moral Philosophy, and Physiognomy," in *Galen's De indolentia* (ed. Clare K. Rotschild and Trevor W. Thompson; STAC 88; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 213–20.

35 See Maud Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 60–67.

36 According to Wilson, *The Death of Socrates*, 108–13, sending away the women serves to retain the masculine identity of Socrates and to urge his friends to control their emotions like men.

37 Being mocked at the cross for not escaping (Mark 15:30–31), Jesus appears more like Socrates. Both passages are about saving oneself. See Chapter 20.7.3 in the present study.

| **Socrates** | **Jesus** |
|---|---|
| Death is closing in | Death is closing in |
| Asleep | Jesus awake |
| Crito awake | Disciples asleep |
| Caring friends | Left alone by friends |
| Refusal to escape | Prayer for escape |
| Silence | No silence |
| Following God's will (obedience) | Following God's will (obedience) |
| Reason/wisdom | Passions/lack of *paideia* |
| Hope | Fear |
| Emptying the cup[38] | Praying that he might not empty the cup |
| Consistent with previous life | Inconsistent with other portrayals of Jesus |

David Konstan has pointed out that grief among ancient Greeks owed much to the level of *paideia*, particularly so with deep and lasting grief.[39] Greek philosophers held that animals and children did not have emotions: "The Greeks did not perceive of emotions as internal states of excitation. Rather, the emotions are elicited by our interpretation of the words, acts and intentions of others, each in its characteristic way."[40] In other words, *rationality* is crucial for the understanding of emotions and passions; hence passions can be mastered cognitively. Failing to master them indicates a lack of understanding or *paideia*. There is thus an element of discernment with reference to the outside world, which left the impression that Jesus was unlearned in his reaction in Gethsemane. Christian theology claimed that he had come with a purpose, as the Jesus of the gospels announced frequently. That is the outer world that should have relieved the pain in Gethsemane. Instead, Jesus appears unable to call on the outer world in the situation, praying instead for his escape, which in the eyes of critics is tantamount to a soldier leaving his post.

38 "Emptying the cup" became proverbial, due partly to its role in the Socrates' story, but it is also a symbol of judgment in the biblical prophets (Isa 29:9–10; 51:17; Jer 25:15–19); see Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary. Volume Two* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 1084.

39 David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), IX–XIII.

40 Konstan, *Emotions*, XII.

The major difference between Socrates and Jesus is not the outcome of the two persons involved; they both did die and they both embraced, eventually, what they saw as the divine will for them. With Jesus, however, the path was complicated enough to make the contrasts as important as the similarities.

## 2.5 From Socrates to Commonplaces

What we have seen above in the classical texts on Socrates' destiny finds confirmation in a wide range of material making clear that these ideals became more general standards in the ancient world, and therefore also came to have a bearing upon how many viewed Jesus at prayer in Gethsemane. The elite who were responsible for the literary activity that has come down to us was particularly influenced by this context. The importance of the Socratic stories for posterity is illustrated by the fact that Cato the Younger, towards the end of the Republican era, read Plato's *Phaedo* before committing suicide, thus making his death an emulation of the Athenian philosopher's example (*Cat. Min.* 67–68); "without the death of Socrates, Cato could not have found the courage to die."[41] Similarly, when Josephus describes the death of Moses he draws upon extra-biblical traditions. Without any foundation in a biblical story, Josephus says that Moses urged his friends not to make his passing a tearful one (*Ant.* 3.324), thus bringing to mind Socrates' farewell to his disciples. No accompanying friends in grief are mentioned in Deuteronomy 34. They have probably been imported from Socrates' legacy of the dignified death, as grieving friends are not mentioned in Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities* 19 either. It is therefore likely that Josephus shapes Moses' death in accordance with Socrates here.

Seneca aptly summarizes the legacy that came out of Socrates' death, namely how to face death courageously. In one of his epistles, Seneca presents Socrates' time in prison preparing for death as carried out on behalf of humankind: "He remained there, in order to free mankind from the fear of two most grievous things, death and imprisonment" (*Ep.* 24.4). His death is construed as being altruistic, not selfish.[42] This is an aspect of the noble death upon which many Christian writers seized.

In a presentation of the rhetoric of praise and blame (epideictic), Aristotle portrays virtue and vice (*Rhet.* 1.9/1366a–68a). Virtue (ἀρετή) consists of some cardinal components among which courage (ἀνδρεία) and self-control (σωφροσύνη) are of special relevance to our topic (*Rhet.* 1.9.1–13). Courage makes people perform noble acts in time of danger, while self-control is the virtue

41 Wilson, *The Death of Socrates*, 121–30 (quotation on p. 130).

42 See Chapter 20.5.2 of the present study.

that disposes them to master their desires (*Rhet.* 1.9.8). Both virtues come into play in the tradition of dying nobly. In his *Eth. nic.* 1115a, Aristotle says that the courageous man (ἀνδρεῖος) confronts death fearlessly (ἀδεής). This dictum is found within a detailed discussion of courage (*Eth. nic.* 1115a–16a), which is above all performance; it comes into being in times of danger and manifests itself in how death is faced. The courageous finds their contrast in the cowards (δειλός) who succumb to fear (λυπή).[43] It is in fact perilous moments such as death that define the difference between the coward and the courageous. Before this moment, the two may not appear so different, but the eagerness of the coward is soon replaced with fear, while "the courageous are keen at the time of action but calm (ἡσύχιοι) beforehand" (*Eth. nic.* 1116a). A fundamental consistency in the life of the courageous is assumed here, which is precisely what distinguishes them from the cowardly.

Keeping calm or tranquil irrespective of the situation is how courage makes itself known and seen. Peter J. Scaer points out how tranquility plays a prominent role in Plutarch's *Lives* as the heroes face the end of their lives. Scaer refers to the text on Pompeius' death (*Pomp.* 79.4), where the general drew "his toga down over his face with both hands, without an act or word that was unworthy of himself, with a groan merely, submitted to their blows."[44] In addition to serenity at the moment of death, this passage also articulates the ideal of displaying consistency by dying as one has lived. Scaer also refers to Emperor Otho, who on the night before his death "slept so soundly that his chamberlains heard his heavy breathing" (*Oth.* 11.1–2), thus bringing to mind Socrates' falling asleep while awaiting his execution.[45] The standards of nobility when faced with death are inculcated through education, as stated explicitly in Plutarch on Pericles (*Per.* 6.1).

Aristotle's discussion above on the courageous man echoes his presentation in *Nicomachean Ethics* of the happy man (ὁ εὐδαιμων, 1100b–1102a).[46] The first characteristic of the happy man is stability, always acting in conformity with virtue and bearing changes in fortune nobly (ἐμμελῶς). It is in situations of adversity (λύπαι) that the happy man demonstrates what nobility really is, as

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43 For the classic opposition of *andreia* and *deilia*, see Jones, *Playing the Man*, 124–33.

44 Scaer, *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death*, 36.

45 The way Suetonius in his *Lives of the Emperors* renders how the Emperors died sometimes amounts to an index of their moral qualities: see for example *Jul.* 82 (dying without saying a word); *Nero* 47–49 (wavering, panic-stricken and frightened, crying, lack of courage); and *Dom.* 14–17 (anxious, suspicious, panic-stricken).

46 This is how Plato introduces Socrates in *Phaed.* 58e (see above). Virtue and happiness belong close to each other in Stoic philosophy; see Christoph Jedan, *Stoic Virtues: Chrysippus and the Religious Character of Stoic Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2009), 110–18.

he carries the misfortunes calmly (εὐκόλως, *Eth. nic.* 1100b3). Plato uses this adverb at the very end of *Phaedo* to characterize how calmly Socrates emptied the cup of hemlock. The serenity with which Socrates faced death is the classical example of true courage, culminating in this adverb in *Phaedo*.[47] The happy man does so due to the greatness of soul (μεγαλόψυχος) that enables him not to succumb to his emotions; therefore, the happy man will never become miserable (ἄθλιος, *Eth. nic.* 1101a).

### 2.5.1 *Courage is Rational*

Many of the standards worked out here entered common Stoic moral philosophy as we know it from the likes of Epictetus and Cicero. In *Encheiridion*, Epictetus formulates, in a context addressing weeping and sorrow, the well-known dictum that "it is not what has happened that distresses this man … but his judgment about it" (16). This brings us back to the importance of discernment pointed out above. Grief originates in a false judgment; according to Epictetus, it is thus a matter of instruction and insight into the fundamental difference between the external and internal. The same was true for Socrates, says Epictetus; he was saved (σῴζεται) by death, not by fight (*Diatr.* 4.1.165). The implication is that it was at the moment of his death that Socrates was able to prove his true nature. According to Christoph Jedan courage is "an essentially rational excellence" in Stoic philosophy.[48]

The distinction above runs through Epictetus' philosophy, in which Socrates plays an important recurring role. In accordance with the ideal he embodied, the philosopher is untouched by all things external: "Bring disease, bring death, bring poverty, reviling, peril of life in court; all these things will become helpful at a touch from the magic wand of Hermes" (*Diatr.* 3.20.12). Glenn Ø. Wehus has demonstrated that Epictetus' philosophy centered around this distinction, even rendering petitionary prayers not merely void but fundamentally misunderstood, since such prayers by their very nature aim to bring changes and thus undermine the insight into differentiating between what matters and

47 See Chapter 2.2.3 of the present study.

48 Jedan, *Stoic Virtues*, 56; virtue and understanding or knowledge belongs closely together, pp. 66–74. Seneca, *Ep.* 82.17 says much the same, that how death is approached is a matter of whether or not it is perceived indifferently. Accordingly, the soul needs the continuous practice (*magna exercitatione durandus est animus*) offered by philosophy and instruction (82.16). Philosophy is like an impregnable wall (*inexpugnabilis murus*) through which no passions find access (82.5).

what does not matter.[49] This Stoic distinction follows upon the idea of equanimity (ἀπάθεια), which Epictetus makes explicit in *Diatr*. 1.4.27–29, where he connects Chrysippus (SVF III.456–90) with his distinction between things that matter and things that do not matter. Living serenely (εὐρόως) and without turmoil (ἀταράχως) comes as a result of true discernment. Against that backdrop, Jesus' prayer in the garden becomes the misunderstanding par excellence, since he prayed and even pleaded more than once for things that did not matter.

### 2.5.2 *Life is a Preparation for Death*

In the rhetorical work *Ad Herennium*, Pseudo-Cicero says that arguments may proceed from considerations based on either security (*incolumitas* or *salus*) or honor (*Her*. 3.3.5), and then lays out the nature of these two sets of arguments. The latter receives more attention and leads to a definition of what virtue is really about:

> When we invoke as motive for a course of action steadfastness in courage (*fortitudinis ... causa*), we shall make it clear that men ought to follow and strive after noble and lofty actions, and that, by the same token, actions base and unworthy of the brave ought therefore to be despised by brave men and considered as beneath their dignity. Again, from an honourable act no peril or toil, however great, should divert us; death ought to be preferred to disgrace (*antiquiorem mortem turpitudine haberi*); no pain (*nullo dolore*) should force an abandonment of duty (*officio*); no man's enmity should be feared in defence of truth; for country, for parents, guest-friends, intimates, and for the things justice commands (*cogit*) to respect, it behooves us to brave any peril (*periculum*) and endure toil (*laborem*). (Caplan, LCL)

The shaming argument holds pride of place in this text, which also emphasizes the endurance of pain when that is of benefit to others. Furthermore, the argument from honor accords with what Cicero states in his *On Duties*, where keeping oneself undisturbed by emotions is a recurrent theme (*Off*. 1.18.66–71; 1.29.102). Wisdom (*sapientia*) and virtue form a pairing that imbue abilities

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49 Glenn Wehus, "'Bring Now, O Zeus, What Difficulty Thou Wilt': Prayer and Identity Formation in the Stoic Philosopher Epictetus," in *Early Christian Prayer and Identity Formation* (ed. Reidar Hvalvik and Karl Olav Sandnes; WUNT 336; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 348–56. This distinction also lies behind both Clement's and Origen's concerns about petitionary prayers; see Chapters 15.4.1–15.4.4 of the present study.

"to restrain the passions—which the Greeks call πάθη—and make impulses (ὁρμαι) obedient to reason (*oboedientes ... rationi*)" (*Off.* 2.5.18). Cicero endorses Chrysippus, saying that "bravery (*fortitudo*) is the knowledge (*scientia*) of enduring vicissitudes or a disposition of soul in suffering and enduring, obedient to the supreme law of our being without fear (*sine timore*)" (*Tusc.* 4.24.53). This ideal has, according to Cicero, been embodied in ancient history by figures such as Cato (see above) and Socrates (*Tusc.* 1.30.74). To Cicero, both men embody Plato's dictum in *Phaed.* 67d: "For the whole life of the philosopher, as the wise man says, is a preparation for death (*commentatio*[50] *mortis est*). Cicero brings together several key points in *Tusc.* 2.18.43:

> ... for it is from the word for "man" that the word virtue is derived (*ex viro virtus*); but man's peculiar virtue is fortitude (*viri autem propria maxime est fortitudo*), of which there are two main functions, namely scorn of death and scorn of pain (*mortis dolorisque contemptio*). These then we must exercise if we wish to prove possessors of virtue, or rather, since the word for "virtue" is borrowed from the word for "man," if we wish to be men. You will perhaps ask how, and rightly so, for such an art of healing philosophy claims to possess (*medicinam philosophia profitetur*). (King, LCL)

### 2.5.3 *The Need for Distinctions:* **Propatheia**

Paul A. Holloway has made stimulating observations on consolation literature that are relevant to this investigation.[51] This literature offers a distinction between consolation and lament or sympathy as in the famous dictum of Aelianus to Aristippus: "I have not come to share your grief (συλλυπούμενος), but to stop it" (*Var. hist.* 7.3). According to Plutarch, sharing tears and lamentation is womanish, whereas what is needed in times of consolation is "men who speak frankly and instruct (διδασκόντων) us that grief (λυπεῖσθαι) and self-abasement are everywhere futile, that to indulge in them is unwarranted and unwise" (*Exil.* 599b–c); only reason (λόγος) enables a man to say to himself "you've not been hurt, unless you so pretend." This text demonstrates several of

50 This noun has three entries in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* s.v, mental preparation, study, or argument. In the present context it refers to the mental preparation provided by the study of philosophy.

51 Paul A. Holloway, "Gender and Grief: Seneca's *Ad Marciam* and *Ad Helviam matrem*," in *Women and Gender in Ancient Religions* (ed. Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, Paul A. Holloway, and James A. Kelhoffer; WUNT 263; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 299–321.

the common observations observed throughout this chapter. Grief is a matter of judgment, and yielding to it is womanish.[52]

In his *Epistle* 99, Seneca addresses the question of consolation and refers to a letter he sent to Marullus, who had lost his young son. Seneca blames him for carrying his loss like a woman (*molliter*, 1). What Marullus really needs is not consolation or solace (*solacia*), but rebuke and scolding: "You are like a woman in the way you take your son's death; what would you do if you had lost an intimate friend?" (2).[53] Such grief is not only useless but also thankless (4). The letter refers to conveying the instruction (*philosophia*) necessary to put aside womanish behavior and embrace manly courage (14). Seneca allows for tears and the emotion of pain only at funerals (15). To him, virtue is not to lack feeling but to mourn bravely: "they see a man who collapses and clings to his dead: they call him womanish and weak (*effeminatum et enervem*). Everything, therefore, should be referred to reason (*ad rationem*)" (17–18). There is a comeliness (*decor*) even in grief and tears, says Seneca; the wise man cultivates that and knows that there is a certain sufficiency (21). The soul must not be surrendered to grief. This is a good example of the notion that masculinity is a matter of performance along a scale that can veer dangerously towards effeminacy.

Seneca clearly modifies the legacy by introducing a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate mourning and sorrow. This is the Stoic idea of distinguishing between *propatheia* and *patheia*, where only the latter is to be blamed as intolerable among the wise. Physical distress, for example, is acceptable as it is *propatheia*, but it is not to be bruited about or to be made public in any way. When silence is broken, *propatheia* then becomes a passion in the negative sense, a target to be blamed.[54]

Some years ago (2005), a manuscript (codex 14) of Galen of Pergamum's text On Not being Grieved or On the Avoidance of Distress (Περὶ ἀλυπησίας/ἀλυπίας) (*De indolentia*) was found in the Vlatadon monastery in Thessalonica. This is a letter to an unnamed friend, occasioned by a fire that destroyed his library, his recipes, medicines and equipment in 192 CE.[55] The letter is aimed at answering

52 See also Plutarch, *Cons. ux.* 608c; 610b–c; Ps.-Plutarch, *Ad Apoll.* 117e–18a; Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.26.2.

53 To a present-day reader it may be strange to put friends ahead of a child. The reason for Seneca's remark is the fact that small children in well-to-do families were cared for by nurses and only gradually became acquainted with their fathers later in their lives, as Seneca states directly in *Ep.* 99.14.

54 This issue returns throughout this investigation; see Chapter 4.2 of the present study.

55 *Galen's De indolentia* (ed. Clarke K. Rotschild and Trevor W. Thompson; STAC 88; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 3–12.

his friend's question, why the medical doctor and philosopher was unaffected by this dreadful event. Why did he not appear distressed at all? (*Ind.* 1–3). This is to Galen a matter of being prepared; hence, a matter of reason and paideia (ἀσκεῖν, 1, 74, 76; γυμνάζειν, 54), and also to be content, as long as food and clothing are there. While some Stoic philosophers, urged absence of emotion and grief in particular, Galen takes a more moderate position. Emotions and grief are to be controled or kept in moderation, not necessarily to be eliminated. He here positioned himself against Musonius Rufus, the Roman Stoic Socrates, who prayed that crisis should come to him, and thus enable him to keep grief away. Galen himself prayed Zeus that crisis should not be sent him, since this was "able to trouble him" (λυπῆσαί με) (*Ind.* 69–74). In the words of L. Michael White, "Galen shows a more subtle and realistic approach to the medical condition than the traditional notion of 'stiff-upper-lipped' Stoic."[56]

A pattern amounting to a commonplace has emerged; this pattern consists of the following building blocks. Fear and fear of death in particular belong to the pleasures that must be mastered. Only the learned man will know how to rule the passions deriving from the body rather than the soul. Yielding to passions is accordingly tantamount to pleasing the body. Manly virtue becomes visible particularly in the calmness shown when confronted with death and passions. The truly wise and happy man lives unaffected by changing circumstances, even when death draws near; thus he undertakes a dignified calm death. Consistency throughout life, and between words and conduct, serves as a marker—analogous to physiognomic theories—of morality and learning. The virtuous man is a coherent character throughout his life.[57] Scaer notes that "dying is by no means a passive event which 'happens' to someone. Death, rather, provides the noble man an opportunity to display virtue and demonstrate his admirability."[58] Jesus at prayer in Gethsemane has more in common with Galen, than with Musonius Rufus, although the difference between the two philosophers is not to be exaggerated.

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56 L. Michael White, "The Pathology and Cure of Grief (λύπη): Galen's *De indolentia* in Context," in *Galen's De indolentia* (ed. Clare K. Rotschild and Trevor W. Thompson; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 248. Although Galen argues very much like a Stoic, he, nevertheless, leaves open the possibility that he might legitimately experience distress, under certain circumstances; see Richard A. Wright, "Possessions, Distress, and the Problem of Emotions: *De indolentia* and the Gospel of Luke in Juxtaposition," in *Galen's De indolentia* (ed. Clare K. Rotschild and Trevor W. Thompson; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 255–57.

57 Thus Jedan, *Stoic Virtues*, 58–65.

58 Scaer, *The Lukan Passion*, 18.

Hence, the virtuous life, embodied by facing death courageously, is a matter of performance, of becoming. Although these standards are deeply embedded in a dualistic philosophical anthropology or a distinction between external and internal which are more remote to Jesus' Jewish apocalyptic setting, they are very much at play in the discourses this study examines.

The present chapter has reviewed how Jesus' agony in Gethsemane might have appeared to the received ancient understanding. There is an element of speculation at work, of course, as the insights are governed by my own imagined impression of what sense it was possible for many of Jesus' contemporaries to make of this incident in his life. However, an examination of the criticisms of Jesus' performance will substantiate the suggestions made here. The available sources are not overwhelming in number, but the observations in this chapter are prevalent enough in them to justify speaking of cultural parameters on which we can rely. Chapter 4 closes in on the Gethsemane texts directly, albeit from the perspective of the foes. Before turning to their views, the next chapter locates the role that cultural parameters on death and fear played in martyr traditions, first the Maccabean texts and then Christian martyr acts. It is of course to be expected that Jesus in Gethsemane finds some echoes in the latter, since that scene corresponds to the situation in which the martyrs find themselves as death is closing in.

CHAPTER 3

# Manly Martyrs

The introductory chapter made a primary effort to describe the apparent lack of correspondence between the heroic martyrdom witnessed extensively in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* and how the Synoptic Gospels portray Jesus in the garden. Reinhard Feldmeier says in the opening line of his book *Die Krisis des Gottessohnes*, that "[k]ein Text des Evangeliums birgt eine so ungeheure Spannung wie jene Erzählung von Jesus im 'Garten Gethsemane'."[1] Nowhere does this tension become as apparent as when it is seen against the backdrop of martyr traditions. In what way do these texts, which claim to represent the ultimate imitation of Christ, deal with the tradition that Jesus faced his death in anguish and prayed for his escape before finally submitting to his Father's will?

The Christian martyr acts draw heavily on previous stories of a similar kind in the Jewish context, particularly the Maccabean martyrs. A presentation of these thus helps place the Christian texts in their proper context, when combined with the observations in Chapter 3. The historical accuracy of these stories is of little import or interest here; it is their aftermath in the culture that matters. Certainly, they are shaped and formed by an ideology to which they themselves contributed, and it is their *ideology* that concerns me here. The stories about the elderly Eleazar, the seven brothers, and their mother in *2 Maccabees* 6–7 are the proper place to enter this material. Furthermore, this passage is extended considerably and turned into a philosophical treatise in 4 Maccabees.

## 3.1 2 Maccabees 6–7

The backdrop against which the martyrs' death is to be understood appears in 2 Macc 6:1–11. The Jews are compelled to abandon the practices ordained by their laws and ordered to partake in festivals honoring Dionysus. Their temple is defiled, and Jews who continued to have their sons circumcised are harassed. In short, the situation is one of idolatry and apostasy. 2 Maccabees 6:12–18 holds the key to this story, as it is the narrators' guiding commentary on the story and serves in a sense to instruct the reader. The account is a reminder (ὑπόμνησις) about listening adequately (v. 17): "Now I urge those who read

1 Feldmeier, *Krisis*, 1.

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this book not to be depressed by such calamities, but to recognize that these punishments were designed not to destroy, but to discipline our people (πρὸς παιδείαν)" (2 Macc 6:12).[2] This brings out the dual meaning of παιδεία, discipline and education.[3] It should, in fact, be seen as a sign of the privileged position of Israel that God takes the trouble to discipline them.[4] Thus his mercy is made visible to them (16).

After the narrator's comments follows the martyrdom of Eleazar (6:18–31), a ninety-year-old man who is forced to eat swine flesh. He refuses, spits it out, and eventually suffers death. He says as he nears the end:

> It is clear to the Lord in his holy knowledge that, though I might have been saved from death (ἀπολυθῆναι τοῦ θανατοῦ), I am enduring terrible sufferings in my body under this beating, but in my soul I am glad to suffer these things because I fear him (διὰ τὸν αὐτοῦ φόβον ταῦτα πάσχω). (2 Macc 6:30)

Eleazar's age is repeatedly noted, thus adding significance to this piece of information. According to v. 23, Eleazar had led a pious life since childhood, not altering or wavering even when faced with death. He is a coherent character; this is in line with the ideal of consistency in the life of a person of high standard in antiquity.[5] Eleazar remained resolute until the very end of his life and is consequently portrayed as a trustworthy person of moral character.[6]

His suffering and death display his nobility and honor. The natural love of life (πρὸς τὸ ζῆν φιλοστοργίαν, v. 20) had to give way to his courage. There is ot the slightest hint of any fear; he gives up his life bravely (ἀνδρίως, v. 27). He died nobly (γενναίως) and willingly (προθύμως, v. 28). The manliness in such a death is clear. In 2 Macc 6:31, the narrator picks up again in commenting upon Eleazar's death: "So in this way he died, leaving in his death an example of nobility and memorial of courage (ὑπόδειγμα γενναιότητος καὶ μνημόσυνον ἀρετῆς), not only to the young but to the great body of his nation." I have given

2 Translation according to NRSV.

3 See Robert Doran, *2 Maccabees: A Critical Commentary* (Hermeneia: A Critical & Historical Commentary on the Bible. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 150.

4 This passage has an analogy in Heb 12:4–11, where the same perspectives on παιδεία are worked out against the background of the martyrs in Heb 11. It is worth noting that Heb 11:38 has its likely source in 2 Macc 6:11.

5 See the discussion of Polycarp later in this chapter.

6 This aspect is not mentioned by Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 153 at all; instead he focuses on the gray hair as wisdom. Scaer, *The Lukan Passion* also overlooks the role of consistency here.

the NRSV translation here, but "memorial of virtue" would certainly be more precise and more appropriate, as it evokes the contemporary ideals of virtuous life involved in this discourse about the fear of death. This comment by the narrator links up with Eleazar's own words in v. 28: "by bravely giving up my life now, I will show myself worthy of my old age and leave to the young a noble example of how to die a good death willingly and nobly for the revered and holy laws."

The resemblances to Socrates involved are important. According to Jonathan Goldstein "[n]o educated Greek could miss the resemblance of Eleazar to Socrates."[7] Both Eleazar and the philosopher were men of age, a fact emphasized in both texts. For both of them their old age was a sign of their coherent piety; they remained consistent until the very end and both died as they had lived. Both martyr and philosopher died noble deaths, showing no fear, but facing it courageously like men of virtue. Their resolve to do so was for both of them a matter of insight or wisdom. 2 Macc 6:23 notes that Eleazar's consistency depended on his λογισμός. Both were offered opportunities to escape death but refused to do so, as is spelled out for Eleazar in 6:21–22, 26 (ἐκφεύξομαι). His friends urged him to pretend to eat the flesh offered him, not unlike Crito's attempt to persuade Socrates to accept the plans for his escape. Eleazar rejected the plan by referring to his aim to die as he had always lived. Both Socrates and Eleazar addressed their friends or opponents with a speech before their final departure. In his final words (2 Macc 6:24–28), Eleazar makes a distinction between what his body experiences and how his soul judges the same (2 Macc 6:30), recalling Socrates' main point in his speech to his friends. Fearing death was to both Socrates and Eleazar a great misunderstanding; it was a matter of discernment. Both philosopher and Maccabean martyr are obedient to their laws, whether Athenian or Torah. Finally, both Socrates and Eleazar embody ideals that remain to be imitated by friends and readers.

### 3.1.1 *The Seven Brothers and Their Mother*

The story continues in 2 Macc 7 with how seven brothers faced a similar destiny and then with how their mother died. Their martyrdoms are all recounted individually; the death of the mother is, however, only briefly noted, although her encouragement and strengthening of her sons has a decisive role in the story. As noted by Maud Gleason in another context, masculinity is *achieved* rather than assigned by sexual identity; hence, women may also act in a manly

7 Jonathan Goldstein, *II Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 41A; New York: Doubleday, 1984), 285; thus also Daniel R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees* (CEJL; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 293, 299.

fashion.[8] This certainly applies to the mother in this story. In many ways this story reiterates basic elements from Eleazar's; the mother is said to be especially admirable and worthy of remembrance, as she carried her loss with good courage (εὐψυχως, 2 Macc 7:20): "Filled with a noble spirit (γενναίῳ πεπληρωμένη φρονήματι), she reinforced her woman's reasoning (τὸν θῆλυν λογισμὸν) with a man's courage (ἄρσενι θυμῷ[9])" (7:21). We note that reason is involved here as well, thus bringing to mind the fundamental factor contributing to achieving manly status.[10] Courage serves to honor the mother especially; it is described in terms equivalent to the virtue of manliness (ἀνδρεία) that occurs so often in this literature. Her nobility and courage thus match those of her sons, who are described in such terms in 7:5 (γενναίως τελευτᾶν) and 7:10–11 (εὐθαρσῶς,[11] γενναίως).

This story also offers an opportunity to escape death. Antiochus, the king, makes promises to one of the sons. When he failed to receive a response, the king urged his mother to advise the young man "to save himself (ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ)" (2 Macc 7:25). Leaning towards her son, she whispers her message to him, urging him to follow the examples set by the brothers, substantiated by two arguments. In the first place, she refers to her own pregnancy, nursing, and rearing of him "to this point in your life" (2 Macc 7:27). This is the argument of consistency, of correspondence between life and death, of dying in accordance with how life has hitherto been conducted. Second, she hopes by God's mercy to get him and the other brothers "back again" (κομίσωμαί)[12] (2 Macc 7:29). The hope in God's eventually resurrecting them stands out. According to 2 Macc 7:40, the last son died undefiled (καθαρὸς),[13] "putting his whole trust (πεποιθώς) in the Lord." This trust is in the story depicted as a hope that God will raise them up to a renewed life (7:9.11, 14, 23, 29). The details of life in the resurrection are in these instances very much a continuation of what is lost in their martyrdom, as stated for example in 7:11: "from him I hope to get them

8 Gleason, *Making Men*, 60.

9 This noun refers to feelings and passions, and here to courage (see LSJ s.v.); see for example Plato, *Resp*. 411a–d.

10 Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 159 makes the point that here a woman is outdoing the male king in terms of courage and manliness.

11 The cognate verb appears in *Phaedo*'s description of Socrates as he faced death; see Chapter 2.2 in the present study.

12 The verb κομίζω means to get back or recover; see LSJ s.v. In this context the term takes on the notion of resurrection.

13 NRSV uses "in his integrity" here, a poor choice given the context of a Jew's being forced to violate dietary laws.

(i.e. his hands) back again."[14] Belief in the resurrection is here a deduction primarily from Deut 32:36: "And he will have compassion on his servants."[15] While being tortured, one of the brothers says that all this is to be considered divine παιδεία to last only for a brief time; eventually "he will again be reconciled (καταλλαγήσεται) with his own servants" (2 Macc 7:33). The last phrase echoes the passage from Moses' speech. God's concern for his servants goes beyond death in this account.

The picture emerging from these stories, which became so influential even to Christian martyr narratives, is one of manly courage and nobility. We saw above how Eleazar mirrored Socrates' destiny in so many details; the influence of the philosopher's death is obvious.[16] The martyrs show no fear when confronted with death and thus manifest themselves as men of virtue and courage. Although the noun ἀγών ("agony") and its cognates do not appear here, there can be no doubt that these accounts are construed in terms of a philosophical struggle. Razi's story uses precisely this noun (2 Macc 14:43). Wisdom or reason plays a role, albeit to a lesser degree than what we saw with Socrates. Escape possibilities are provided but emphatically refused. Seeking escape would be equivalent to mistrusting God and his future vindication. Living consistently and in a piety marked by coherence from childhood until the time of death holds pride of place in this literature. Death is not supposed to bring any change in fidelity to and trust in God. It is in fact precisely the opposite: death is deeply revealing of moral character. Finally, these stories demonstrate παιδεία, not only in the way these martyrs faced death but also in terms of God's disciplining his people. It is through these experiences that manly courage is achieved.

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14 This is according to the longer version; see Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 146. The story of Razi's death (2 Macc 14:37–46) has many similarities to those told in 2 Macc 6–7 about manly courage and noble death. He tore out his entrails, "calling upon the Lord of life and Spirit to give them back to him again" (v. 46). This belief in resurrection is markedly different from Paul in 1 Cor 15:35–49 where *transformation* is at the center of his belief in resurrected life.

15 The context in Moses' farewell speech is that God will vindicate his people; cf. Rev 6:9–11.

16 Thus also Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 164. For a detailed presentation of how 4 Maccabees construes Judaism as a philosophy, see Jan Willem van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 57. Leiden: Brill, 1997), 272–94.

## 3.2 Fourth Maccabees: Mastering the Desires

4 Maccabees is an elaborate and extended version of 2 Maccabees 6–7, though surely with a philosophical turn. The structure of the treatise falls into three parts: 1) 1:1–12 sets the agenda of whether devout reason (λογισμός) is sovereign (αὐτοδέσποτός) over the emotions (τῶν παθῶν, 1:1); 2) 1:13–3:18 presents the philosophical theory (ὑπόθεσις) under scrutiny; 3) The final part offers narrative support to the theory through the examples of Eleazar, the seven brothers, and their mother. We now come to realize how intimately connected death, courage, manliness, and philosophy really are.

### 3.2.1 *Philosophy in Practice*

The thesis to be discussed is stated explicitly in the very first sentence. The philosophical subject is the supremacy of reason, the highest virtue, over against emotions: "Since I am about to demonstrate a most philosophical statement—that pious reason is absolute master of the passions—I would rightly counsel you that you should pay close attention to this philosophical inquiry" (4 Macc. 1:1).[17] 4 Maccabees thus enters the well-known discourse on the mastery of desires or passions[18] and presents the case in common philosophical and rhetorical terms.[19] The treatise is about self-control and mastery of the ultimate passion, which is clinging to life under any circumstances. The story sets out to prove that the highest reason is available—in a superior way—in the Jewish law and its dietary rules. This means that the question raised particularly in the narrative demonstration is already reflected in the theoretical part, in the prologue's noting of gluttony and lust, of the appetite to eat food forbidden to Jews (1:13, 27, 34–35).[20] The "noble bravery of those who die for the sake of virtue (ἀπὸ τῆς ἀνδαγαθίας τῶν ἀποθανόντων) is the best example of the thesis" (1:8). They demonstrated manliness (ἀνδρεία) and endurance (ὑπομονή) when they were threatened by the tyrant (1:10–11).

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17 Quoted according to David A. deSilva, *4 Maccabees* (Septuagint Commentary Series; Leiden: Brill, 2006).

18 For this philosophical discourse, see the comments on the exordium in deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 67–84.

19 The Greek ἐπιδείκνυμι (1:1) and ἀπόδειξις (3:18) and the cognate verb in 1:8 clearly indicate this. The verb refers to something shown or displayed; Plato's *Phaedr*. 235a has the context of a lecture on rhetoric, while Aristotle's *Rhet*. 2.18/1391b discusses rhetorical speeches. The noun and its cognates refer to giving proofs or arguments; see LSJ s.v.

20 Sandnes, *Belly and Body*, 101–104, where "enslavement to appetites" is the focus. The book argues that pejorative belly-rhetoric is deeply implicated here.

In 4 Macc. 1:15, the author defines reason: "Now reason (λογισμὸς) is the mind that with sound logic prefers the life of wisdom." In short, reason manifests itself practically in how life is conducted, primarily vis-a-vis emotions, be they pleasure (ἡδονή) and pain (πόνος, 1:20), fear (φόβος) or sorrow (λύπη, 1:23). To bring these passions under control is a matter of education, of instruction in both the law and in human matters (1:17). This education fosters the classical Greek virtues of justice, self-control (σωφροσύνη), and courage (ἀνδρεία)[21] (4 Macc. 1:6, 18–19, 30–31). According to 1:6, it is not a matter of destroying (καταλῦσαι) the emotions, but of not yielding (εἴκω) to them. Nobody can eradicate[22] the emotions, per 3:2, but "reason is able to keep bringing it about that we not be enslaved by desire (δουλωθῆναι τῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ)." In short, reason does not bring an end to emotions, but is their true antagonist (3:5). Reason, courage, nobility, and virtue thus manifest themselves in not giving in to emotions of various kinds, fear included. The failure to do so indicates either pleasure-seeking or a lack of appropriate education, or rather both. What we observe here is an attempt to negotiate the issue of passions in a way that recalls the notions of *propatheia* and *patheia* discussed at the end of Chapter 2.[23] As long as the emotions are under rational control, they are categorized under the notion of *propatheia*; if not, they become *patheia*. In my book *Belly and Body in the Pauline Epistles* (2002), I work out the contrast between a person without self-control, a glutton or pleasure-seeker, and a person mastering the desires; this is precisely what the philosophical parameters at work here target. We have already seen these parameters in the Socratic legacy. The pleasure or appetite to which Crito was enslaved was the desire to keep on living, even in a situation where virtue was at stake and would be jeopardized by that clinging to life.

### 3.2.2 *Narrative Demonstrations*

The remaining part of this text, starting in 3:19, consists of narrative demonstrations or *exempla*, rhetorically speaking. As in 2 Maccabees 6–7, it is still the matter of eating pork and food sacrificed to idols that launches the account. The narratives follow one after the other, interspersed with comments. At two different places, arguments for choosing *not* to suffer death but to escape that fate are presented in imagined speeches (*prosopoiia*): "And yet let us ponder: if some among them had been cowardly and unmanly, what kind of arguments might they have used?" (4 Macc. 8:16). The invented arguments of the cowards (δειλόψυχοι) and unmanly (ἄνανδροι, 4 Macc. 8:16–26) follow. The nature of

21 On this gendered virtue, see deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 74.

22 The Greek text here has ἐκκόψαι, which means to cut off.

23 See Chapter 2.5.3 of the present study.

their arguments is seen in this citation: "Why do we remove ourselves from this pleasant life (τοῦ ἡδίστου βίου) and deprive ourselves of this sweet world (τοῦ γλυκέος κόσμου)?" (v. 23). The adjectives used here are not in themselves pejorative; they simply refer to things being pleasant or sweet, like food or drink.[24]

Putting this theory to the test in the story, however, shows that there is little doubt that describing life and the world in such terms links up with the critique of gluttony, desire, pleasing oneself, and the fear in which these arguments originate. The noun δειλία used in v. 16 and its cognates refer to timidity and cowardice, often appearing as the opposite of manliness or ἀνδρεία (Plato, *Laws* 648b; *Phaedr*. 239a). In the latter text as well as in Plato's *Tim*. 87a, cowardice is associated with stupidity or lack of instruction, thus being ἀμαθὴς or unlearned. The question of *paideia* in fact resonates throughout this treatise on martyrdom. Similarly, 4 Macc. 16:5–11 imagines a fictitious alternative speech by the mother; she bewails that she has been stripped of all her children and made bereft of grandchildren, with no one left to bury her: "But sympathy for her children did not dislodge the mother of the young men, like-souled with Abraham as she was" (14:20). This is clearly a reference to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22), a motif that eventually plays a significant role in this literature as a whole (see below).

Throughout the narrative, escape possibilities are provided[25] but consistently refused. The key figures themselves never contemplate this opportunity at all; it is always offered to them by others, as Crito did with Socrates. Not only are they not afraid (οὐκ ἐφοβήθησαν), they are indeed *inspired* by their philosophy (ἀντεφιλοσόφησαν) and rational thinking (εὐλογιστία, 8:15) to oppose the tyrant unanimously and unswervingly.

The following elements from these narratives represent recurrent ideas crucial to understanding Fourth Maccabees and highly relevant for this investigation into Jesus' apparent fear of death. Throughout, the author reiterates the thesis he sets out to discuss according to 1:1, that reason is superior to all kinds of emotions in ruling (κρατεῖν) them. When passions take on a dominant position (παθοκρατεῖσθαι), that is due to weakness of reason (7:20); only the wise and courageous are masters of their emotions: μόνος γὰρ ὁσοφὸς καὶ ἀνδρεῖός ἐστιν τῶν παθῶν κύριος (7:23). This applies to women as well, as demonstrated by the proof given by the life and death of the courageous mother (16:2, 4).[26]

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24 LSJ s.v.

25 See 4 Macc. 5:5–13; 6:14–15; 10:1; 12:4–6.

26 See Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, "Taking it Like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees," *JBL* 117 (1998): 249–73.

All figures face death courageously, demonstrating manly virtue and not yielding to fear or emotions.[27] They thus die a noble death, to be contrasted with unmanly cowards who have enslaved themselves to their passions.[28] Some key terms in Greek with their cognates describe the courageous in this way: ἀνδρεία, εὐγενὴς, μεγαλόφρων, καρτερία, γενναῖος, θαρρέω, καρτεροψυχία, ἐυψυχία. These are contrasted with the coward who is described in some of the following terms: ἀνανδρία, δειλία, δειλανδρέω.[29] As for the mother, devout reason gave her a man's courage to subdue her emotions (ἀνδρειώσας,[30] 15:23). In steadfastness, courage, and endurance, her nobility even surpassed that of men (15:30 cf. 16:14).

Fourth Maccabees is a philosophical discourse demonstrating reason to be the virtue superior to all others, as the prologue makes explicit and as the narratives reinforce. From the superiority of reason it follows that παιδεία is assigned an essential role (1:17). Reason makes the martyrs superior to emotions and death and comes as a result of training or education. Mastering the desires is an achievement only for those trained in prudent wisdom (πάντες φρόνιμον ἔχουσιν τὸν λογισμόν, 7:17). Philosophy and education—here being instructed in the Jewish laws—are the true means of that achievement.[31] "Our philosophy," says one of the brothers, "teaches us self-control and trains us in courage" (5:23 cf. 5:34–35).[32] Their sufferings are brought upon them because of their godly training in virtue (διὰ παιδείαν καὶ ἀρετὴν θεοῦ, 10:10). In some passages, the education they received is presented as preparing a soldier for battle. The formulation in 13:16 brings to mind Eph 6:10–20: "Therefore, let us put on the full armor (καθοπλισώ) of self-control (παθοκρατείαν) which is divine reason (τοῦ θείου λογισμοῦ)."

### 3.2.3 Agôn

Hence, it is only natural that the *agôn* motif[33] becomes dominant in this text. The martyrs are described as athletes participating in an athletic contest

27 A present-day reader might note, though, that the emotion of revenge is hardly avoided in these stories.

28 See for example 4 Macc. 5:23, 31; 6.5, 20–21, 24; 9:26; 10:14; 11:12; 12:14; 13:10.

29 In 2 Macc 8:13 this verb describes people running away from a battle; in other senses, it is associated with escape and with soldiers not standing their ground.

30 The verb ἀνδρειόω sometimes mean "becoming a man"; see LSJ s.v.

31 This closely parallels Philo of Alexandria; see Sandnes, *Belly and Body*, 108–32.

32 In Greek: σωφροσύνην τε γὰρ ἡμᾶς ἐδιδάσκει ὥστε πασῶν τῶν ἡδονῶν καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν κρατεῖν καὶ ἀνδρείαν ἐκδιδάσκει ὥστε πάντα πόνον ἑκουσίως ὑπομένειν.

33 See the classical study of Victor C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature* (NovTSup 16; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 23–75.

(4 Macc. 11:20; 16:16). Eleazar is presented as a noble athlete "bathed in sweat (ἱδρῶν) and gasping heavily for breath" (6:10–11). Similarly, 4 Macc. 7:8 says that one of the brothers fought, shedding his blood and sweat (γενναίῳ ἱδρῶτι). In some texts, the *agôn* motif borders on military imagery, as in 9:24 where the martyrs are fighting a battle (στρατεὶαν στρατεύσασθε).[34] According to 4 Macc. 17:23, the martyrs' courage and endurance became models for the tyrant's soldiers. However, in 14:4–5 the martyrs are presented as running (τρέχοντες) in a race where immortality is the reward. Towards the end of his story, the author imagines a fitting burial inscription for his heroes. Here the athletic imagery abounds:

> For what happened through them was truly a divine contest (ἀγὼν θεῖος). For at that time virtue was offering a prize (ἠθλοθετει[35]) examining them by means of endurance. Victory brought her imperishability in a long-lasting life. Eleazar was competing first (προηγωνίζετο), and the mother of the seven children was contending (ἐνήθλει), and the seven brothers were competing (ἠγωνίζοντο). The tyrant was struggling against them (ἀντηγωνίζετο), and the world and the way of life of human beings were watching. Reverence for God conquered, crowning (στεφανοῦσα) her own athletes (ἀθλητὰς). And who did not admire the athletes of the divinely given law? Who were not astounded? (4 Macc. 17:11–16)

Here all the ingredients in an arena struggle or race are present: "the image of the wrestling match (the ἀγών, 11:20; see 9:23; 16:16) transforms the martyrs' experience from a passive victimization to an active resistance, more amenable to topics of courage and the noble death."[36] The martyrs died in accordance with their lives and the ideals they had followed from childhood. Death did not bring any changes in their attitudes and behavior (5:36–38); they died for the principles they were taught since they were born and bred (11:15). Changing course in life due to threats of death is due to nothing but ignorance (ἀλόγιστον, 6:18–19). Life and death are thus in harmony; there is coherence between beginning and end, between words or instruction and conduct. This literature closes with references to the upbringing of the martyrs as children,

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34 These terms are used more for military service and less so for the arena of contests; see LSJ s.v.

35 From the Greek ἀθλοθετέω, awarding a prize; LSJ s.v.

36 For the *agôn* motif in this literature, see deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 193, see also pp. 190–95, 244–46.

which serves an important role in portraying the consistent piety of the brothers, thus making 4 Maccabees ring out as a study of *paideia*.

### 3.2.4 *Beneficial to Others*

The final perspective to contemplate is the sacrificial interpretation assigned to the deaths of the martyrs. From this perspective, their sufferings and deaths become more than individual destinies. They face death for the benefit of their community, making their martyrdom essentially altruistic. Without being spelled out, it is obvious that this perspective would have seriously affected any attempt to escape or even indicate reluctance. At the moment of his death, Eleazar says a prayer:

> You know, God, that though I had opportunity to save myself (μοι σῴζεσθαι), I am dying by fiery torments on account of the law. Become merciful (ἵλεως) to your nation, being satisfied with our punishment on their behalf (ἀρκεσθεὶς τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν δίκῃ). Make my blood their purification and take my life as a ransom for theirs (καθάρισον αὐτῶν ποίησον τὸ ἐμὸν αἷμα καὶ ἀντίψυχον. λαβὲ τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχήν). And having said these things, the holy man died nobly in torments and held his ground to the point of tortures unto death on account of the law by means of reason. (4 Macc. 6:27–30)

He was offered escape, but denied it on account of the altruistic purposes of his death. That purpose is seen not only in the nouns and verbs but also in the key prepositional phrase "for them."[37] This term is used once in the New Testament (1 Tim 2:6) about the death of Jesus, possibly inspired by a saying like Mark 10:45: "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom (λύτρον) for many." The sacrificial interpretation is taken up again in 4 Macc. 17:21–22:

> [T]he homeland purified (καθαρισθῆναι), they having become, as it were, a life-in-exchange (ἀντίψυχον) for the sin of the nation, and through the blood of these pious ones and through the propitiatory offering

37 For the sacrificial motif involved here, see deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 147–49. He emphasizes that the sacrificial power is not attached to the blood per se, but to "the steadfast commitment to God leading to this costly libation that has value in the author's sight." Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 59.8.3 uses ἀντίψυχον with reference to dying in exchange for others.

(τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου) of their death, Divine Providence rescued (διέσωσεν) the previously mistreated Israel.

This is taken from the narrator's comments on the stories. Such remarks function rhetorically as instruction for readers, providing an insider's view on the happenings that must therefore be given due weight. Terms associated with purification and sacrifice serve to place the sufferings in the right perspective. At stake was not merely the deaths of individuals, but the very destiny or salvation of Israel.[38] When the deaths of the seven brothers are seen from the perspective of their mother, Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22) comes into play (14:20; 15:28; 16:20; 18:11). She is portrayed as a true daughter of Abraham, having the same mind and showing the same kind of obedience. Genesis 22 is interpreted as a sacrifice (σφαγιάζω)[39] or a burnt offering (ὁλοκαρπόσομαι).[40] The motherly perspective thus draws Abraham and Isaac into the interpretation of the martyrs' deaths. They died courageously, but if they had failed to do so, Israel would have been bereft of a much-needed sacrifice.

## 3.3 The Maccabean Martyrs and Gethsemane

This study does not propose an exhaustive comparison, but aims to draw together some insights to serve as a backdrop against the Gethsemane scene. Gethsemane is, of course, outside the scope of the Maccabean narrative. However, the ideology that penetrates it regarding death and the fear for death is by certainly salient to our topic. So what, eventually, do these chapters on martyrdom, so replete with philosophical ideals, bring to our investigation on Jesus' agony in Gethsemane? At present this is *my* question rather than something this literature grappled with, but it is also clear that such comparisons also nagged at many ancient Christians as well. According to the Synoptic Gospels, there can be no doubt that Jesus was afraid. In his prayer he sought escape, even in the Lukan version, but not in John's (see below).

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38 Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Hermeneia: A Critical & Historical Commentary on the Bible. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 285–86 is right in pointing out that the martyrs' deaths were aimed at assuaging God's wrath against Israel for having been led astray by the tyrant.

39 See Acts 7:42, citing Amos 5:25–27 for this term.

40 This term is found in *Laus Patrum* in Sir 44:11–50:24, in the rather long section on Aaron's priestly ministry referring to how he performed sacrifices twice a day.

To people honoring the memory of these martyrs, Jesus' prayer for having the cup pass from him might well appear the prayer of a cowardly and weak person. The martyrs were, like Socrates, offered escape by *others*; they did not seek that for themselves. On the contrary, they foreclosed any such possibilities. Jesus' prayer is his *own* attempt to find a way out. Jesus yielded to his emotions, and thus acted like a person who pleased himself, a man lacking the manly courage to face death. His yielding to emotions of fear would likely be viewed as giving in to concerns of the most primary of bodily needs, life itself. From the perspective voiced in 4 Maccabees, it would be fair to view Jesus as a glutton and pleasure-seeker in the way he clung to life.

To people honoring the memory of these martyrs, Jesus' prayer for having the cup pass from him reveals a man without proper education and wisdom, an unlearned person lacking in reason. His failure to master his desire to cling to life proves that he stands outside the league of those properly trained through true philosophy.

To people honoring the memory of these martyrs, Jesus' prayer for having the cup pass from him implies a lack of consistency and coherence. Jesus appeared to be a person who did not comply with his words at the moment of truth. He was not fully committed to his ministry, either temporally or morally. This issue of coherence would, of course, be grievously aggravated by the fact that Jesus had a purpose on earth, a divine will to fulfill. His prayer in Gethsemane would, therefore, bring up the question of his purpose and his living according to that purpose until the very end. To fail in the mission assigned to him, just as its crucial point was drawing near, would be judged equivalent to mistrusting God. At the very moment when his devotion to humanity was called upon, Jesus was committed to his own interest instead. The martyrs, by contrast, remained fully devoted to their altruism.

This would, of course, strengthen the impression that he is not altruistic, but concerned about himself. The sacrificial perspective on the deaths of the martyrs has many resemblances to how the gospels depict the aim of Jesus' ministry (Mark 10:45), but in Gethsemane, Jesus comes out not as altruistic but as self-centered. The more the death of Jesus is associated with the purpose of his life, the more Gethsemane also becomes a problem, both of character, and of theology.

We are now closing in on Jesus in Gethsemane and turn to the Christian analogues of the Maccabean martyrs, as portrayed in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*. A characteristic feature of Christian martyrology is that the martyr is imitating Christ, literally taking him as an example. It remains to be seen if Gethsemane finds a place within this early framework, and if so, precisely how it fits.

## 3.4 Martyrs "Imitating Christ"

Though we are turning to Christian martyrdom, we remain within parameters worked out above, both generally in the ancient world and more specifically in the Maccabean tradition.[41] However, with Christian martyr texts, this investigation reaches a new stage. Composed between the 2nd and 4th centuries CE, these texts are much later than the gospels in which the story of Jesus in Gethsemane is found. They are part of a pattern with longstanding roots in ancient ideals on how to face death courageously, and simultaneously they make up parts of the reception history of this very incident in Jesus' life. Hence, this chapter achieves a double aim; while it demonstrates that the ideals of facing death in a manly and courageous fashion were woven into the very fabric of Christian attempts at making sense of martyrdom, it also provides examples of how Christians coped with the tradition of Jesus in the garden.

Candida Moss argues in *The Other Christs* (2010) that *acta martyrum* represent narrative reworking of the Passion Narrative, and hence are important sources on how the biblical story lived on in the imagination of early Christians. She wants to retrieve the martyr narratives as part of the "reception history" of

41 Historically speaking, Christians' suffering martyrdom probably were more sporadic and piecemeal than is often assumed. This reality is corroborated by many of the stories themselves, which assume the presence and support of Christians who are not directly involved in the martyrdom, but who are simply watching the events. *Mart. Pol.* 4 says that Christians are not to give up themselves voluntarily and claims that this is in accordance with the Gospel. Elisabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 29 makes a distinction between "what really happened" and "what meanings are produced." The present investigation is concerned with the latter. I am cautious, though, about the tendency found in Castelli's book, and even more explicitly in Candida R. Moss, *The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), to hold that that Christian martyrs were produced not by experience but by rhetoric. There is no doubt that rhetoric is importantly at play here; this very chapter of my investigation implies that the stories presented are molded to a significant degree by rhetoric and exaggeration. However, for rhetoric to be effective, it cannot be entirely cut off from real incidents that contributed to the creation of a Christian martyr culture. Furthermore, persecution is an extremely difficult category in historical studies, since it always involves many aspects, some of which are experiential and not objective; see Karl Olav Sandnes, *The Gospel 'According to Homer and Virgil': Cento and Canon* (NovTSup 138; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 85–93. Finally, the external evidence provided by Tacitus on Nero's persecution of Christians (*Ann.* 15.44) and of the Roman senator Thrasea (*Ann.* 16.22), who faced accusations not unlike the Christians though he was not one, and Pliny's famous epistle to the Emperor (*Ep.* 10.96–97) does not receive sufficient respect in Moss' recent book.

the gospel traditions. Furthermore, her study proceeds from insights common to all who read these texts, that they construe the martyrs as imitating patterns set by Christ himself. The idea is developed from New Testament passages such as Mark 8:34;[42] John 15:20;[43] Phil 2:8,[44] and 1 Cor 11:1[45] that all portray Christian life as some kind of following in the steps of the suffering Christ. The metaphor of "drinking a cup" (Mark 10:37–40) seems to have triggered the idea of martyrdom as a supreme form of following Christ.[46] The *acta martyrum* develop this imitation into an assimilation with Christ, thus giving Moss reason for considering a martyr to be an *alter Christus* or another Christ:

> In order for the martyr to appear to be imitating Christ, he or she must cohere with the generally held presentation of Jesus in the passion narratives insofar as is possible. For the presentation to be effective, the author cannot drift too far from his or her audience's understanding of scripture even as he or she seeks to reimagine and control it. The relationship between the narrative reworking and standard interpretation, therefore, is closer than in the commentary of the church fathers. In some respects, therefore, the *acta* provide a clearer picture of the interpretations of the passion narratives.[47]

Both observations make it pertinent to ask, "What about Gethsemane?" The importance of the Passion Narrative as such is a given in any presentation of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, among others, but scholars have scarcely asked about the garden prayer within that setting.

The martyr acts, especially Polycarp's martyrdom, exemplify the attitude taken to death and Gethsemane in this literature. References to passages outside the acts under study are included only selectively. This will suffice to demonstrate how Gethsemane is situated in this genre, in which betrayal, arrest,

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42 "If anyone want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it."

43 "'Servants are not greater than their master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you ..."

44 "... [H]e humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross."

45 "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."

46 Moss, *The Other Christs*, 37–40. Interestingly, Irenaeus explains the courage of the martyrs in despising death by reference to Jesus' dictum in Gethsemane about the strength of the Spirit (*Haer*. 5.9.2; SC153:109–112).

47 Moss, *The Other Christs*, 53.

interrogation, and death take center stage and naturally bring to mind the situation that occasioned Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane.

### 3.4.1 *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*

The story of how Polycarp of Smyrna faced death is the earliest extant Christian martyrdom narrative, composed in the middle of the 2nd century CE.[48] The story has been preserved also by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 4.15–25), but was handed down in the form of a letter from the church of Smyrna to the Christians in "Philomelium and to all the communities of the Holy Catholic Church everywhere."[49] This traditional letter opening conveys the relevance of the story to Christians generally, thus bringing to mind how the stories both of Socrates and the Maccabean martyrs aimed to convey *paideia* by instructing disciples on how to conduct their lives.

*Mart. Pol.* 1.1–2 introduces the narrative letter by stating that this martyrdom is "in accordance with the Gospel." The implication is that this story follows patterns set by Christ in the Passion Narratives (ὡς καὶ ὁ κύριος) and is intended to produce imitators (ἵνα μιμηταὶ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀυτοῦ γενώμεθα).[50] According to *Mart. Pol.* 22, the aim of this epistle is to present Polycarp as an example in this regard to fellow believers, to ensure that the believers do not seek to save only themselves (μὴ μόνον ἑαυτὸν θέλειν σώζεσθαι) but also see to the salvation of others (*Mart. Pol.* 1:2). Altruism is thus central and imitates Christ, of course, but how it accounts for the cup prayer is not contemplated.

During a time of persecutions in Smyrna, the rabble was crying for Polycarp: "Away with these atheists! Go and get Polycarp" (*Mart. Pol.* 3:2). To save himself, he was then persuaded by his friends to leave the city and stay at a nearby farm. After visions appeared to the bishop that he had to be burnt alive, he was betrayed and then arrested (6). Interrogation and the martyrdom of fire that eventually consumed him soon follow. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* is an early witness to a martyr cult among the Christians, as it describes the celebration

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48 For introductory questions, see Paul Hartog, *Polycarp and the New Testament: The Occasion, Rhetoric, Theme, and Unity of the Epistle to the Philippians and its Allusions to New Testament Literature* (WUNT 2.134; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 18–32; Moss, *The Other Christs*, 196–98.

49 The translation and text edition used in the following is *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs: Introduction, Texts and Translations* by Herbert Musurillo (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972). On the letter genre of this text, see Boudewijn Dehandschutter, *Martyrium Polycarpi: Een literair-kritische stuide* (BETL 52; Leuven: Universitaire Pers, 1979), 157–75.

50 Thus also in *Mart. Pol.* 17:3; 19:1. This is a martyrdom "according to the Gospel"; see Gerd Buschmann, *Das Martyrium des Polykarp* (Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern 6; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 49–58.

of his “birthday,” which is actually the day of his death (18:3). Narratively, Polycarp’s martyrdom picks up details from the Passion Narrative that makes the Christ assimilation notably vivid:[51] Polycarp is betrayed by one of his servants, whose destiny is said to be equal to that of Judas. The bishop was arrested by a police captain by the name of Herod. The arrest takes place on “the day of preparation,” i.e. the day before the Sabbath and they came with arms “as though against a brigand,” citing Matt 26:55 about the arrest of Jesus. Polycarp was led into the city sitting on an ass. These details underline what martyrdom is about, being an imitator of Christ in his sufferings.

### 3.4.2 *“Be a Man”*

Polycarp and the other martyrs die a noble death; they face their destiny courageously as men. This is both stated explicitly and implied throughout the narrative. The common term for nobility in such contexts, γενναῖος and cognates figure prominently (*Mart. Pol.* 2:1–2 (4x);[52] 3:2) together with different terms for courage (7:2; 12:1) in the portrayals of the martyrs. They are portrayed like athletes or soldiers partaking in a contest or a battle (18:3); eventually, Polycarp receives the crown of immortality (τὸν τῆς ἀφθαρσίας στέφανον ἀπολαβών, 19:2). This mirrors how 4 Maccabees describes its martyrs. As Polycarp enters the arena, a voice from heaven addresses him: “Be strong, Polycarp, and have courage (Ἴσχυε. . .καὶ ἀνδρίζου)” (*Mart. Pol.* 9:1);[53] a more faithful translation would be: “and be a man,” as has been demonstrated by L. Stephanie Cobb’s study on masculinity and martyrdom, *Dying to be Men* (2008). She shows that the ideals worked out above are deeply gendered; they are about becoming men or achieving virtuous masculinity. The masculinity of the martyrs is also illustrated in the way they are described as overcoming and controlling the desires of their bodies.[54]

Polycarp is not disturbed (ἐταράχθη) at his being arrested (5:1). When the execution is about to proceed, Polycarp became “filled with a joyful courage (θάρσους); his countenance was filled with grace, and not only did he not

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51 See also Moss, *The Other Christs*, 56–59.

52 Thus also in other *acta martyrum*, such as *Acts of Carpus, Papylus, and Agathonicê* 35 (Greek recension). Buschmann, *Das Martyrium des Polykarp*, pays no attention at all to this key term.

53 Buschmann, *Das Martyrium des Polykarp*, 182 points to the Septuagint as the background for this encouragement, but misses the cultural discourse at stake.

54 L. Stephanie Cobb, *Dying to be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts. Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 65. This was also pointed out by Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 59–68.

collapse in terror at what was said to him, but rather it was the governor that was amazed (ἐκστῆναι)" (12:1). Here we see the confluence of manly courage, Christian grace, and physiognomy. Furthermore, the martyr's calmness is contrasted with the amazement of his opponent. Similarly, in 2:2 it is the bystanders who are weeping as they see the martyrs being tormented. The martyrs themselves did not utter a sound or a cry (μήτε γρύξαι μήτε στενάξαι), but remained silent.[55] The opponents are portrayed in 12:2 as a rabble unable to control their emotions. They "shouted out aloud in uncontrollable rage (ἀκατασχέτῳ θυμῷ καὶ μεγάλῃ φωνῇ ἐπεβόα)," and even asked for a lion to be let loose on Polycarp, although this was against the rules, since the daily time for that had already passed.[56] They thus show themselves to be willing even to negate laws laid down by society: "the author of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* highlights the pagans' lack of masculinity by revealing their susceptibility to emotion—while the Christian martyrs endured torture stoically."[57] Thus the narrative answers who is overcome by emotions and leaves no doubt as to who they were. In accordance with current patterns given in the culture (see above), the martyrs are also contrasted with cowards. Quintus, a Phrygian, turned cowardly (ἐδειλίασεν) when he saw the wild beasts he was supposed to fight (*damnatio as bestias*, 4:1). Δειλία is the fear that the martyrs have to overcome (3:1) and this phrasing represents the opposite of manly courage.

### 3.4.3 *From Escape Motif to "Salvation"*

Formulations taken from Phil 2:4 report that Polycarp and the martyrs were not thinking only of themselves, but also that their deaths were altruistic. Hence, the story told is one of salvation, "to desire not only one's own salvation (μὴ μόνον ἑαυτὸν θέλειν σώζεσθαι) but also that of all the brothers" (1:2). This brings to mind Socrates and the Maccabean martyrs, who refused to accept any plans for saving themselves. That σῴζειν has some reference to escape is made explicit in *Mart. Pol.* 8:2 in what Herod, the police captain, offers Polycarp: "Now what harm is there for you to say 'Caesar is Lord,' to perform the sacrifices and so forth, and thus save your life (διασώζεσθαι)?" The martyr refuses the offer and instead contributes to the salvation of the brothers, most likely by setting an example of death that will bring them salvation in the end (17:2). Such an irony is a leitmotif in this genre.

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55 Cf. Chapter 4.2.1 of the present study.

56 There was a certain procedure even in these cruel games. The main events were the gladiators. Fighting with the beasts or public executions normally took place at noon since they were less spectacular and attracted fewer spectators.

57 Cobb, *Dying to be Men*, 65.

According to *Mart. Apollonius* 46, the martyr gives thanks to God for the sentence passed on him by the proconsul "which will bring me salvation (σωτηριώδος)." According to *Mart. Fructuosus* 4:2, martyrdom is a process towards escape or salvation (*ad salutem*). The escape motif is altered here; by not seeking any escape from the martyrdom, real salvation is achieved. In denying their own escape possibilities, the martyrs celebrate their own salvation through death: "The governor persisted and said: 'Swear and I will let you go. Curse Christ!' But Polycarp answered: 'For eighty-six years I have been his servant and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme against my king and savior (τὸν σώσαντά με)?" (9:3)

The governor offers the possibility of escape by making reference to his age, a question also important in Crito's attempt to persuade Socrates to escape and with Eleazar.[58] The irony of escape becomes visible when Polycarp claims to have been *saved* already. L. Stephanie Cobb argues that Polycarp's old age is emphasized to emphasize the expectations of weakness that often attend the elderly: "Perhaps the author makes a point of Polycarp's age precisely because it adds to the unexpected masculinity of the martyr."[59] Not to deny the point made by Cobb here, but it is equally true that this piece of information makes sense within the perspective of a story of dying nobly and courageously according to the parameters worked out in the preceding and present chapters. Polycarp's advanced years, then, are to be compared with Socrates and Eleazar, who both were offered escape with reference to their old age.[60] Their age worked rhetorically according to the parameter of consistency in the life of virtuous men. They did not waver, but kept to their convictions throughout, even at the highest cost. The reference to Polycarp's age fits this pattern well.[61] Moss lists several similarities between Polycarp and Socrates and rightly says that *imitatio Christi* and *imitatio Socratis* are intervowen.[62]

The *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, although the first and most important martyr act, is hardly the sole example of the pattern of dying nobly among Christians.

58 See Chapters 2.1 and 3.1 of the present study.

59 Cobb, *Dying to be Men*, 79.

60 In addition to this similarity between the two, those who provide escape possibilities often refer to children and family (see *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas* in particular), and a strategic pretense to appear to comply with certain demands. There is no doubt that Socrates is a shadow figure in this literature; see *The Martyrdom of Pionius* 17. Such a comparison is in fact present in the *Mart. Apollonius* 38–41 (see below).

61 That the deaths of the martyrs cohere with their previous lives is a recurrent motif in this genre (*Acts of Carpus, Papylus and Agathonicê* 22 (Greek recension)).

62 Candida R. Moss, "Nailing Down and Tying Up: Lessons in Intertextual Impossibility from the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*," *VC* 67 (2013): 129–30.

*The Letter of the Churches in Lyons and Vienna* records an uprising against Christians in 177 CE, for which Eusebius is our source.[63] A true disciple of Christ was to follow in the footsteps of the Lamb, as noted in Rev 14:4 ("these follow the Lamb wherever he goes"). The martyrs, and Blandina in particular, are portrayed as noble athletes fighting in the arena and winning the crown (17–19, 36–43), which marks a contrast with the ignoble cowards (ἀγγενεῖς καὶ ἄνανδροι, 35) that the pagans were taunting them as. Blandina encouraged her children "like a noble mother (καθάπερ μήτηρ εὐγενὴς, 55), echoing the iconic Maccabean mother. Blandina's crucifixion (41) makes the reader recognize Christ in her.[64]

Cobb has argued convincingly how the author engages the discourse on masculinity and death in the two contrasting figures Perpetua and her father in *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*. The encounters between daughter and father highlight issues pertaining to death and masculinity.[65] Just like the riotous crowd in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, so it is here the father who manifests a lack of control over passions and emotions: "the physical positions of father and daughter graphically illustrate the inversion of authority and masculinity."[66] According to 5:1–6, he was worn with worry (*consumptus taedio*), he asked for pity on his grey hair, and threw himself to the ground shedding tears (*lacrimans*). Perpetua, however, envisions herself preparing for her death, her clothes being stripped off, anointed for a contest just like gladiators, and realizing that "suddenly I was a man (*facta est masculus*, 10:7). She has become the true man, virtuous, courageous, and mastering her passions until the very end.

## 3.5 What about the Gethsemane Prayer?

Against this backdrop, we now ask if there are any traces of the story about the anxious Jesus in the garden within the *acta martyrum*. These stories are construed as imitations of Christ's passion, down even to fine narrative details. They depict situations mirroring the situation that caused the prayer in Gethsemane: the imminence of death. At a few points we may sense agony, as in the *Acts of Carpus, Papylus and Agathonicê* 46 (Greek recension): "Then

63 See Moss, *The Other Christs*, 189.

64 Moss, *The Other Christs*, 62–63. Cobb, *Dying to be Men*, 113–16 demonstrates how masculinity is negotiated in the story of Blandina.

65 Cobb, *Dying to be Men*, 99–102.

66 Cobb, *Dying to be Men*, 99.

she was raised up and as soon as she was touched by the fire she shouted aloud (ἐβόησεν) three times: 'Lord, Lord, Lord, assist me (βοήθει μοι)! For you are my refuge'." Such prayers, however, are the exception in this literature, not the rule.[67] There is not much space left for fear leading to a prayer to escape. In the prayer just rendered, the help called for is transformed into martyrdom itself. According to the *Mart. Montanus and Lucius* 6, the object of all their prayers were the very chains (*o optata vobis omnibus catena*!), which is a more representative picture here.

Some passages even militate against a prayer to avoid "the cup," as *Mart. Apollonius* 36–41 illustrates. In a form like a creed, Jesus Christ and his message are briefly stated. He taught us about virtue (ἀρετή): "By his passion he destroyed the roots of sin. For he taught us to put a stop to anger, to moderate our desires (ἐπιθυμίαν μετρεῖν), conquer our pleasures (ἡδονὰς κολάζειν), uproot our grief (λύπας ἐκκόπτειν)." The last element cited here runs verbatim contrary to how Mark and Matthew (though not Luke) portrays Jesus in the garden. Clearly the question of λύπη was a matter of concern in how this incident from Jesus' life was handed down. The immediate context of this citation draws Socrates into the picture. First, obedience to the law and the authorities is emphasized in a way that recalls the philosopher. Furthermore, Socrates and Christ are explicitly seen as forming a pair of unrighteous sufferers for the sake of virtue. Socrates prefigured Christ's sufferings and his way of facing death.

Is there any place left for Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane within such a framework? The first thing to note is that the idea of imitating Christ—fundamental to this literature—appears to dismiss the garden scene almost completely. This means that the prayer for escape that Jesus uttered according to all the Synoptic Gospels is ill-fitting.[68] At this point, it is worth commenting upon *Mart. Pol.* 7. This chapter, which recalls the arrest scene in Gethsemane,[69]

67 Such prayers are surprisingly rare; see Tobias Nicklas, "Gebete in frühchristlichen Märtyrerakten," in *Das Gebet im Neuen Testament: Vierte europäische orthodox-westliche Exegetenkonferenz in Sâmbâta de Sus 4.–8. August 2007* (ed. Hans Klein et al.; WUNT 249; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 402–404. I find it confusing that Nicklas nevertheless considers the Gethsemane prayer to be a prayer to be imitated in this literature (p. 397); that cannot be asserted without substantive explanation.

68 It is worth noting that the rather comprehensive investigation of Claire Clivaz, *L'ange et la sueur de sang*, makes no reference to these texts. I think they are important for understanding the reception of Jesus' agony in Gethsemane.

69 The arrest of Polycarp is reported in words taken from Matt 26:55: "With the slave then, the police and cavalry set out on Friday at the dinner hour with the usual arms *as though against a brigand*."

reports that Polycarp was found reclining in a room upstairs. "He could have left and gone elsewhere but he refused, saying: 'May the will of God be done (τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ γενέσθω)" (7:1). According to Boudewijn Dehandschutter, the closest analogy to this prayer is found in Acts 21:14, Matt 26:42, and Luke 22:42, implying that Gethsemane is not explicit here.[70] The prayer in question may well simply represent the practice of the Lord's Prayer, and thus be a standard practice with no particular reference to Gethsemane. Dehandschutter is right in saying that "God's will" in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* refers to martyrdom as such, as is stated clearly in 2:1, which sets the agenda for the story about to be told: "Blessed indeed and noble are all the martyrdoms that took place in accordance with God's will."

Nonetheless, this prayer cannot be viewed without taking into account the narrative setting in which it is uttered in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*. Situation, scene, and even narrative style bear clear resemblances to Gethsemane. Moss rightly says that the prayer is "Gethsemane-styled,"[71] although some important clarifications are necessary. Polycarp's prayer echoes *only* the second part of Jesus' prayer in the garden. The prayer for an escape is not mirrored; on the contrary, it militates against the notion of a martyr. Hence this story remains solely with Jesus' submitting to the divine will. The way the escape motif is mentioned as something denied by Polycarp strengthens the impression that the Gethsemane prayer has been shortened to include only into its second part. There is scarcely any room left for the first part about escaping "the cup" (cf. *Mart. Pol.* 14:2); that prayer is subordinated to Jesus' submitting to his Father's will and not rendered with Polycarp. The text relates to the Gethsemane prayer rather selectively, leaving out its first part, and thus proceeding from a portrayal of Jesus in the garden as solely obedient and submissive. The obedience and submission found in Jesus' prayer rules out other perspectives. Accordingly, the dicta about the weak flesh and temptation are simply left out here. By not getting involved with the prayer of escaping "the cup," but focusing solely on the submission, the tensions involved between the two parts of the prayer have been resolved through harmonization and idealization of the event told in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus becomes the ideal martyr, in Gethsemane, through embracing his Father's will.

The Christian martyr acts follow in the wake of their Jewish analogues. According to this heroic legacy, the Christian martyrs imitate Christ. When it comes to Gethsemane, however, ambivalence emerges. The second part of the

70 Dehandschutter, *Martyrium Polycarpi*, 247–48.

71 Moss, *The Other Christs*, 58.

prayer is easy to adopt and adapt, but this happens at the cost of the prayer to have the cup pass from him and the agony caused by fear for the imminent death. This chapter has taken us into the midst of how Jesus in Gethsemane was received. The next chapter turns to how critics and outsiders came to think of this incident. We see there that the material uncovered so far comes into play with direct reference to Gethsemane.

CHAPTER 4

# Jesus' Agony Seen by Foes: A Lack of Manly Courage

From the third century of the Common Era on, it is attested that pagan philosophers engaged critically with the story of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. He was seen as a coward unable to control his desire to survive, praying to escape from the task that Christians alleged God to have assigned him. They ridiculed this anti-hero. These sources[1] bear witness to a discourse on Gethsemane between Christians and some critics. Hence, the discourse takes historical rather than rhetorical shape. Furthermore, the fact that this criticism is preserved in Christian texts means that the material to be presented here also paves the way for the distinctively Christian discourse on Jesus in Gethsemane. The two are merged in a way challenging to their presentation but equally revealing of the conversational nature of the texts.

Pagan polemics against Christ-believers are present even in the New Testament (for example, Acts 17:6–7 and Luke 23:2, 5). The hub of the criticism rendered there is that Christ-followers are disturbing social harmony and stability in proclaiming another Caesar. It is held against Christ that he represented a power that eventually would overturn the established order. Critical textual variants of Luke 23:2 make this evident by including how family relationships are also threatened, particularly so in Marcion (according to Epiphanius): "turning away the wives and children."[2] Such accusations levelled against Jesus draw on common sentiments against Christians for engaging in subversive activities.[3]

From the 2nd century on, a philosophically based criticism appears alongside the subversion claim, and now the target becomes the Christian literature per se; this is the framework of the present chapter. John Granger Cook in

1 Giancarlo Rinaldi, *Biblia Gentium: A First Contribution Towards an Index of Biblical Quotations, References and Allusions Made by Greek and Latin Heathen Writers of the Roman Imperial Times*. (Rome: Libreria Sacre Scrittura, 1989) offers only scant help as it actually contains few texts.

2 Sandnes, *A New Family*, 3–31.

3 See Pliny, *Ep*. 10.96–97 and Tacitus, *Ann*. 15.44.2–5, Dieter Lührmann, "SUPERSTITIO: Die Beurteilung des frühen Christentums durch die Römer," *TZ* 42 (1986): 193–213 points out the political implications of this critique. Much relevant material is found in the older works of H. Leclercq, "Accusations contre les Chrétiens," in *DACL* Tome Premier (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1907), 265–307 and Wilhelm Nestle, "Die Haputeinwände des antiken Denkens gegen das Christentum." *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 37 (1941/42): 51–100.

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*The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism* (2002) has addressed this issue in helpful ways. Pagan criticism draws on various observations; some are about contradictions between gospel accounts and some are source-critical in nature, anticipating in fact questions that continue to trouble present-day scholarship. Some observations concern the literary style and language,[4] pointing to the rusticity of the apostles and the movement in general,[5] while others question what is related from philosophical points of view, thus targeting the doctrine.[6] When it comes to the agony in Gethsemane, we find that many of these aspects are involved in the pagan polemics of relevance to our topic.

A methodological challenge for this chapter is that the two most important figures, Celsus and the anonymous opponent in Macarius of Magnesia, are known only through their Christian respondents. In other words, they do not exist as independent sources, but are embedded in texts aiming at refuting them. This is not necessarily disabling to the primary aim of this chapter, since we will learn more about Celsus' critique if we do not restrict ourselves to the citations of him given by Origen. Origen's response reflects Celsus' criticism and thus brings out its most important points, but this also works the other way around; Celsus likewise helps us understand his Christian counterpart. Since this is the situation we have to deal with, it does not make sense to treat the critique separately from the response within which it is found. By implication then, this chapter includes Christian reception history on Gethsemane and is fully integrated in the Christian discourse to be worked out in the following chapters.

## 4.1 Celsus: A Greek Philosopher Evaluates Jesus in Gethsemane

Around 175 CE the Greek philosopher Celsus wrote *Alêthês Logos*, a book against the Christians.[7] His work is lost, but Origen made a detailed response in eight books. He refutes Celsus, proceeding from extensive quotations which

4 Sandnes, *The Gospel 'According to Homer and Virgil,'* 65–84.

5 See Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 149–59 (on Celsus).

6 See for example Sandnes, "Baptism as Seen by Outsiders: Julian the Apostate As an Example."

7 For a discussion of the date of this work, see Arthur J Droge, *Homer or Moses? Early Christian Interpretations of History and Culture* (HUT 26; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 74–75; Jeffrey W. Hargis, *Against the Christians: The Rise of Early Anti-Christian Polemic* (Patristic Studies 1; New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 17–40; Horacio E. Lona, *Die 'Wahre Lehre' des Kelsos* (Kommentar zu frühchristlichen Apologeten 1; Freiburg: Herder, 2005), 54–55.

he then opposes (*Contra Celsum*). From these quotations we gain a fairly good picture of Celsus' lost text.[8] Celsus demonstrates familiarity with Christian traditions, texts, and practices. He is aware of the narratives on Jesus' agony in Gethsemane, and illustrates well how intellectual pagan opponents reasoned on the Gethsemane incident.

I proceed from Origen's citations taken from Celsus' critique, and then turn to Origen's response, since the latter is clearly prompted by Celsus' polemics. I think the nature of this critique finds affirmation in Origen's response and key terms occurring there. Accordingly, I delve into those key terms occurring, since they may serve as a foil against which to achieve a better understanding of Celsus.

### 4.1.1 *Rhetorical Agôn on Gethsemane*

The best point of departure is *Cels*. 2.9, where Celsus renders an alleged Jewish accusation on how the divinity of Jesus can be upheld (πῶς δ᾽ ἐμέλλομεν τοῦτον νομίζειν θεόν).[9] The implication is that Jesus' agony in Gethsemane particularly raises the question of Jesus' divinity. Celsus' critique reflects that this incident in Christian sources was intimately connected with Christology: can Jesus' divinity really be reconciled with his performance in the garden? The former appears to be undermined by the latter. It is obvious that Gethsemane figures prominently in this issue since Origen cites Matt 26:38, which renders Jesus' agitation at his approaching death: "I am deeply grieved, even to death." Celsus claims a fundamental discrepancy between Jesus' divinity and his behavior on this occasion: "in other matters ... he did not manifest (ἐπεδείκνυτο) anything which he professed to do." Jesus was not consistent; his words failed to materialize when it came to his deeds. Celsus considers this to be typical of Jesus, but especially so in the disreputable scenes of Gethsemane and the passion. That the Greek verb ἐπιδείκνυμι means "showing" or "demonstrating" is worth observing, but it is often used in terms of giving proof.[10] This term and

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8 For a more general presentation of Celsus' criticism, see Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 94–125. Wilken does not, however, emphasize the question under review in this study. For a recent, thorough presentation of Celsus' criticism generally, see Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism*, 17–102; for our question see in particular pp. 49–50 and Cha, "Confronting Death," 277–83.

9 SC 132:300. The English translation is from *Origen, Contra Celsum* (tr. Henry Chadwick; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953).

10 LSJ s.v. The term may refer to how street preachers present their tricks (*Cels*. 3.50–53), thus demonstrating that this term is closely connected to something made manifest or proven.

its cognates are rooted in ancient rhetorical practice and often come into play in sources pertaining to Gethsemane. Jesus in Gethsemane does offer a proof, though there is a dispute over what is really proven.[11] Celsus and Origen are portrayed as engaging in a rhetorical dispute on Gethsemane, thus making the conversational perspective of the present study come alive.

#### 4.1.2 *Lack of Consistency* (*Ethos*)

Celsus' allegations are aimed at demonstrating, according to fundamental rhetorical principles, that the claim to Jesus' divinity is false and must be abandoned.[12] Judged by the fundamental insight made in ancient rhetoric that life and word must correlate—the argument of coherence or consistency pointed out in Chapters 2 and 3 above—Jesus fails. This fundamental criterion taken from the practice of rhetoric is about harmony or correspondence between words and life, dubbed the proof from *ethos*. Aristotle describes the *ethos* of a speaker as the most important rhetorical proof (κυριωτάτην ἔχει πίστιν τὸ ἦθος, *Rhet.* 1.2.3–4/1356a), which means that the virtues or vices of the speaker are crucial to the persuasive effect of what is being said (*Rhet.* 1.9.1/1366a). This is also the argument Celsus holds against Jesus in *Cels.* 2.16, where he points out the difference between "saying" (λέγων) and "showing" (δεικνύει) in the stories about Jesus.[13] It is worth noting here that the Greek verb δεικνύειν is precisely the one used by Aristotle when he introduces his argument from *ethos* in *Rhet.* 1.2.3/1356a. Jesus' fear of death does not in any way correlate with his claim to divinity. The bottom line of the argument is of course a philosophical idea of divinity as necessarily being *unaffected* by emotions and changes (ἀπάθεια). The claim that Jesus was divine fails to do justice to this standard and does not accord with the principle of coherence. Celsus' dependence on rhetorical arguments suggests that he found himself in an *agôn* over the true meaning of Gethsemane.

This rhetorically based critique of a lack of consistency between claim and performance can easily be given a theological turn, namely that Jesus failed to meet the purpose set for his ministry as described in the gospels themselves. This turn comes to the surface in *Cels.* 2.70, picking up on 2.9 and the accusations that Jesus hid himself (ἐκρύπτετο): "What messenger (πεμφθεὶς ἄγγελος) that has been sent ever hid himself when he ought to be delivering the message

11 See for example Chapters 16 and 17 of the present study.

12 For the use of ancient rhetoric in pagan polemics, see Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism*, 9–16; on Celsus' use of rhetoric in his criticism of Christianity, see Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 169–70.

13 SC 132:326–30.

that he had been commanded to proclaim?"[14] To this Origen responds by referring to Matt 26:55, which says that Jesus taught openly in the temple, thus making it possible to having him arrested there. The accusation makes it clear that the question of being a coward is involved.

### 4.1.3 *Cowardice*

Celsus stops to focus on different aspects from the incident in the garden. In the first place, Jesus was hiding[15] and escaping most disgracefully (κρυπτόμενος μὲν καὶ διαδιδράσκων ἐπονειδιστότατα); he even ran away (φεύγω) from the situation (*Cels*. 2.9).[16] This point is either an exaggeration consciously inserted by Celsus, as Origen points out, or it is Celsus' interpretation of Matt 26:46: "Get up, let us be going (ἄγωμεν). See my betrayer is at hand." A possible, but not likely, reading of the passage is that Jesus with his disciples made attempts to flee,[17] and Celsus appears to proceed from that option. This concurs with a polemical rendering of Jesus' prayer about avoiding the cup. Celsus claims that what is done both deliberately and according to God's will is contradictory to simultaneously suffering grievous pain (οὔτ ἀλγεινὰ οὔτ' ἀνιαρὰ, *Cels*. 2.23).[18] This is the issue of discernment involved when faced with pain and distress. This dual perspective is precisely what the Christians claim about Jesus' death; he fulfilled God's plan but simultaneously sought a way out. Celsus finds this duality impossible. There is no doubt that Gethsemane is included in this since *Cels*. 2.24 includes a citation from Matt 26:39 (the cup dictum).[19] This citation is introduced with the following paraphrase of the Gethsemane prayer: "Why then does he utter loud laments (ποτνιᾶται) and wailings (ὀδύρεται), and pray that he may avoid the fear of death (τὸν τοῦ ὀλέθρου φόβον εὔχεται παραδραμεῖν)?"[20] Celsus asks what place the agony in Gethsemane is attributed within an overall picture of Jesus' ministry as depicted in the gospels. In pointing out the anomaly of this scene within the larger story of Jesus in all the gospels, Celsus leaves the philosophical framework of his argument and turns instead to theology, to observations from within the gospels and Christian thinking.

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14 SC 132:452–54.2–4.

15 The motif of Jesus' hiding himself is rather odd here in light of the textual evidence of the New Testament. However, it is worth noting the way the Fourth Gospel makes use of a hiding motif; see Chapter 8.5.5. In that chapter I argue that the hiding motif in John's Gospel represents John's transformation of Gethsemane traditions.

16 SC 132:300.1–11.

17 See Chapter 16 of this study.

18 SC 132:346.1–4.

19 SC 132:348.3–6.

20 This verb here refers to escape; see LSJ s.v. (παρατρέχω).

### 4.1.4 *Divine?*

Origen's response assumes that different Gethsemane receptions were in circulation at the time. The first and most important are the divergences over the implications of incarnation.[21] Jesus intentionally assumed (βουληθεὶς) a human form disposed to feel pain and grief, particularly so when these were inflicted upon him by others (*Cels*. 2.23).[22] Jesus was *not* lord (κύριος) of his feelings; hence, they *did* affect him, says Origen. It is precisely from this willingness of Jesus that humankind benefitted so much. Origen thus defines Jesus' agony in altruistic terms, including the agony in Jesus' sufferings generally and the theological significance attributed to them (as in *Cels*. 2.38).[23]

According to *Cels*. 2.16, Celsus says that it would have been better if Christians considered the suffering as only apparent (δοκέω).[24] Origen notes that some heretics did say that Jesus suffered only *apparently*, not in reality, thereby witnessing to a Christian discourse on Jesus' suffering, within which the agony in Gethsemane also figured. The question of Docetism is thus seen as part of the Gethsemane discourse. Origen picks up on the aspect of incarnation in *Cels*. 2.25,[25] where Origen distinguishes between those utterances of Jesus that are divine[26] and those that are human. The latter group also includes statements of weakness (τὸ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης σαρκὸς ἀσθενὲς),[27] echoing a motif in Mark 14:38 and Matt 26:41, but not found in Luke's Gethsemane passage. The cup prayer figures prominently in this discussion.

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21 In *Cels*. 1.69, Origen says that Jesus took on human form and was capable of dying a human death: "For this reason, in addition to other things, we say that he was also a great wrestler (μέγαν ἀγωνιστὴν) because his human body was tempted in all points like men, and yet was no longer like the sinful men in that it was entirely without sin" (SC 132:270.6–10). Origen here combines incarnation with Gethsemane, most likely influenced by the longer Lukan reading—a rather common move as we come to see—and invokes Heb 4:15 at the same time. Furthermore, he immediately cites Isaiah 53. With regard to the exegesis of Heb 5:7–9 (Chapter 9 in the present study), it is worth noting that the related passage from that epistle substantiates incarnation in ways equivalent to how Gethsemane works elsewhere.

22 SC 132:346–49.

23 SC 132:374–76.

24 SC 132:328.17–23.

25 SC 132:352–55.

26 As an example he notes John 14:6 where Jesus says that "I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me," and John 8:40 about his being with the Father.

27 SC 132:352.8.

To Origen the Gethsemane text exemplifies both the divinity and the humanity of Jesus. The cup prayer refers to his weak human flesh, while his obedience to his Father's will is a statement of his divine spirit. Origen attempts to downplay the first by saying that the cup dictum appeared only once, while his willingness to comply with his Father's will occurred several times. Even his prayer to avoid death is uttered with piety and reverence, as "Father if possible" clearly indicates. His sufferings, though, are real; Origen asks rhetorically how else Jesus' suffering could have inspired Christians who were facing persecutions.

Clearly, Origen felt challenged by Celsus, and he struggles to prove his case. While making reference to incarnation and simultaneously claiming that the cup saying is uttered by the human rather than the divine Jesus, he is in fact separating what the idea of incarnation seeks to keep together. In short, by making this move, Origen is about to undermine the very idea of incarnation which is so important for his argument. He is trying to smooth this out by the considerations made above. Origen's argument concedes something to Celsus here, seemingly without being aware of it. Taking the occurrence of ἡ ψυχή in the dictum "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even to death" as his point of departure, Origen says that Jesus' body, including his soul, was not God (*Cels*. 2.9).[28] Origen thus somehow embraces the idea that Jesus' agony in some way militates against his divinity. His interpretation clearly seeks to downplay the agony at the expense of Jesus' submission to the Father's will. The way Origen here compromises his own argument is clear evidence of how troublesome the story of Jesus in Gethsemane was, and that he shared some of the assumptions made by his opponent, especially that divinity and agony could scarcely be united.

Second, Origen points out that the remarks in the gospels about Jesus' agony demonstrate their honesty and trustworthiness as sources (*Cels*. 2.10; 2.15; 2.24; 2.26).[29] They choose not be silent on matters which Celsus and opponents came to regard as a ground for criticism (cf. the logic of criterion of embarrassment). By saying this, Origen indirectly admits that the gospels on this point might have triggered criticism from people like Celsus, and he was certainly right. He holds against Celsus, though, that he exaggerates and cites the text incorrectly; it is not stated anywhere that Jesus "uttered wailings" (ὀδύρεται, *Cels*. 2.24).[30] Most importantly, he criticizes Celsus for having left out

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28 SC 132.302.11–15.

29 This source-critical view is exactly the opposite of what Julian the Apostate later claims; see below in this chapter.

30 SC 132:348.3–5, 12–13. It is not far-fetched though, particularly with the Lukan longer version in view here.

the second part of this biblical story, namely about Jesus willingly obeying his Father's will (Matt 26:42).

Celsus makes use of a "Jew" as a rhetorical figure who is his mouthpiece in voicing the critique. He has not familiarized himself with the whole story of Jesus in Gethsemane. Origen accuses him of having stopped reading and thus missing the whole story. This is worth observing since the focus on the cup prayer attests that "the request that the cup be removed was the most shocking element in the Gethsemane story for readers in antiquity."[31] If Celsus had included the whole story, Origen implies, he would have recognized that Jesus faced his sufferings in a prepared and courageous fashion (πρὸς τὸ πάθος παρασκευὴν καὶ εὐτονίαν, *Cels*. 2.24).[32] This statement rounds off Origen's response on the agony in Gethsemane in Book 2, and the term εὐτονία likely mirrors the hub of Celsus' polemics, which is about unmanly behavior (see below).

It enhances the problematic image of Jesus in Gethsemane that he was betrayed and deserted by his associates.[33] Celsus here draws on ideals of friendship, like spending time together (ὑπὸ τῶν συνόντων αὐτῷ καὶ παντὸς ἰδίᾳ κεκοινωνηκότων, *Cels*. 2.9).[34] This adds to the picture of someone who is truly betrayed (cf. *Cels*. 2.12; 2.21). Furthermore, the plural "disciples" also adds to this picture by blaming all the disciples for what only Judas did. These two observations together certainly contribute to depicting a failure. Not only was Jesus himself a failure when he faced death, but he had also collected a rabble of friends who were equally failures. To Celsus there is an intimate correspondence between Christian doctrine and those embracing it; a philosophically coherent doctrine is not to be expected from a countrified rabble.[35] To Celsus, Gethsemane made this evident beyond any doubt.

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31 Claire Clivaz, "The Angel and the Sweat Like 'Drops of Blood' (Luk 22:43–44): P69 and f13," *HTR* 98 (2005): 428.

32 SC 132:350.41–42.

33 Origen responds to this particular critique in *Cels*. 2.12 by saying that many philosophy students abandon philosophical life and embrace the life of common people. This is not unique to Judas in his relationship to Jesus.

34 SC 132:300.8–302.9. This is also pointed out by Lona, *Die "Wahre Lehre" des Kelsos*, 128–29.

35 Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 149–52. Pietzner, *Bildung, Elite und Konkurrenz*, 205–28 presents Celsus' philosophy and view on the Christians. She points out that according to Celsus, Jesus' fear of death ("... Todesangst, Feigheit sowie Flucht ..." (p. 222)) follows naturally from the rusticity of Christians generally. This view accords with the philosophical outlook which brings to mind the Platonic dialogues on fearing death (Chapter 2). Philosophy was, in effect, a preparation for death and fear of death was a sign of ignorance and lack of wisdom.

### 4.1.5 *Multiple Interpretations*

Origen says that he is familiar with another interpretation of the cup dictum among Christians (*Cels*. 2.25),[36] implying that Origen witnesses three opinions held among Christians on the agony: the heretics' view (see above), his own, and the one likely found among Christians with a special concern for Jews or Jewish Christians (cf. Rom 9:1; 10:1). Its logic goes like this: Jesus, the Savior, knew that his death would bring upon the Jews much suffering for having caused his death. This is easily deduced from Matt 27:25: "His blood be on us and on our children." Out of his love for them, he therefore prayed that death might pass by him. In practice the prayer means that Jesus would say like this (ὡς εἰ ἔλεγεν): "Since a consequence of my drinking this cup of punishment, a whole nation will be deserted by thee, I pray that, if it be possible, this cup may pass from me, that thy portion which was dared to attack me may not be utterly deserted by thee."[37] Origen offers no comment on that interpretation here. This Jewish-friendly interpretation appears somewhat odd, and is probably to be evaluated primarily for its purpose of depicting Jesus as altruistic throughout, even to the point of escaping a death that brought such trouble upon the Jews.[38]

## 4.2 Silence as Bravery: A Common Ground

*Cels*. 7.53 is found within a context where Celsus holds it against Christians that they introduce new doctrines, inferior to the old and venerable traditions. For Celsus, Christian faith is subversive. Origen introduces this section by citing one of Celsus' critical questions: "What comparable saying did your god utter while he was being punished?" The ironic tone is very clear as it involves examples of noble attitudes taken towards suffering by Greek heroes. Anaxarchus, while being beaten, made the following statement: "Beat on, beat on the pouch of Anaxarchus, for you are not beating him."[39] His heroic death was legendary.[40] By speaking this way, a true divine spirit (θείου τινὸς ὡς ἀληθῶς πνεύματος ἡ φωνή) made itself known, according to Celsus.[41] Similarly,

36 SC 132:354.23–25.

37 SC 132:354.29–33.

38 See Chapters 13 and 18 of the present study.

39 This is the body-soul distinction that is essential in the Socratic legacy; see Chapter 2.2.1 of the present study.

40 See *Origen Contra Celsum* (tr. Chadwick), 439 n. 8 for references.

41 SC 150:138.11–12.

Epictetus remained calm when his master broke his leg, saying "You will break my leg," and when broken, he said: "Did I not tell you that you will break it?"[42] On the basis of these courageous examples, Celsus formulates his challenge: "What saying equal to these did your god utter under sufferings?" (*Cels.* 7.53).[43] Origen responds by turning to the Passion Narrative, particularly Jesus' silence (σιωπή) while being scourged, which shows his great meekness (ἄκρᾳ πρᾳότητι ἐχρήσατο) during the most severe suffering: "For he said nothing either ignoble or angry to those who ventured to do such terrible things to him" (*Cels.* 7.55).[44] Origen thus responds that Jesus demonstrated courage and patience (ἐνέφηνε καρτερίαν καὶ ὑπομονήν)[45] that surpassed that of any Greek who endured suffering. Obviously, silence holds pride of place for both antagonist and protagonist in this debate.

Although the Greek terms used by Origen are not taken directly from the Septuagint version of Isaiah 53, they do bring to mind that text. This is suggested by phrases like "he did not open his mouth" (οὐκ ἀνοίγει τὸ στόμα) in the Septuagint (Isa 53:7LXX, twice) and being silent (ἄφωνος) in the same verse, as well as 53:8 about humiliation (ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει); that term works synonymously with πραΰς (humble/meek), which is the term used by Origen here.[46] It is crucial for Origen that Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane that the cup may pass from him not be isolated from the silence he showed during the climax of his sufferings. Attacks on the agony in Gethsemane as an isolated scene miss this wider context of Jesus' sufferings. The Passion Narrative provides the proper background for understanding the agony and, consequently, the two parts of the Gethsemane prayer are not to be separated. Clearly, for Origen, Celsus approached the Gethsemane scene without taking this into account.

Against that background Origen says (*Cels.* 7.55) that Jesus' prayer of letting the cup pass from him cannot be taken as an example of cowardice (ἀπὸ ἀγεννείας), "as some think (ὡς οἴονταί τινες)."[47] Origen here attests to the fact that Celsus' critique echoes a widely held opinion that Jesus acted like a coward in the garden. Against a picture of Jesus inspired by Isa 53, these people referred

42 It is well known that Epictetus suffered from an impairment to walking, but this was not inflicted upon him by his master; see Lona, *Die 'Wahre Lehre' des Kelsos*, 420.

43 SC 150:138.16–17.

44 SC 150:142.10–15.

45 SC 150:142.6.

46 See for example Isa 26:6LXX and Matt 11:29, where these terms are used together. Isa 53 is also used elsewhere in Origen to bring out the significance of Jesus' death; for example *Cels.* 2.59; 8.54.

47 SC 150:142.18–19.

to his prayer in Gethsemane, claiming that Jesus there (like Philoctetes; see below) betrayed his true nature and failed to manifest courage. Naturally this undermined references to the silence of Isaiah 53. Through this prayer, Jesus broke the idealized silence or calmness when faced with death. What happened in the garden then runs contrary to his ministry, which culminated in brave silence at being crucified. This is where the dispute stands according to this literature: is there coherence between Gethsemane and the silence of the passion?

Origen makes two remarks here. In the first place, he refers to his interpretation of the cup elsewhere, where an altruistic approach inspired by Jesus' passion also becomes instructive for how to interpret the garden prayer.[48] Against that backdrop, Origen claims that not even the first part of the prayer can be seen as an attempt by Jesus to excuse himself (ἡ δοκοῦσα ὑποπαραίτησις[49] εἶναι) from the cup. (*Cels*. 7.55).[50] The implication in this discussion is, of course, that this prayer might well appear precisely that way, *if* taken in isolation. Taken together though, the two parts of the prayer present the true piety that consists of 'Jesus' submitting his will to God's in a situation from which in principle he would prefer to escape. Origen refers to the last part of the prayer: "yet not what I want but what you want." This demonstrates that Jesus is confident in this situation and that he prefers to be in accordance with divine providence.

Jesus' silence during the hearing, scourging, and mocking enables Origen to claim that Jesus did in fact face death nobly. The garden prayer is subordinated to the crucifixion and understood properly in the light of that event. Jesus' silence is crucial for Origen's response to Celsus, revealing that he proceeds from the idea that Jesus died a noble death according to standards set by contemporary philosophy. The very first sentence of Origen's response addresses the importance of silence: "Our Saviour and Lord was silent (ἐσιώπα) when false witnesses spoke against him, and answered nothing (οὐδὲν ἀπεκρίνετο) when he was accused" (*Cels. Pref.* 1).[51] This is the reason that at points he struggles to cope with the arguments presented by Celsus (see above). They share an ideal; Celsus criticized Jesus on that basis and his evidence was Gethsemane. Origen refuted Celsus on the same grounds and his example was the passion.

48 See Chapter 14 of the present study.

49 According to LSJ s.v. this term may be used about excusing oneself from military service out of weakness.

50 SC 150:144.21–22.

51 SC 132:64.1–3.

### 4.2.1 *Philoctetes*

Claire Clivaz has pointed out that the idea of noble death did not focus exclusively on mastering passions or emotions. Manly suffering also manifested itself in silence.[52] Philoctetes, a minor figure in Homer wounded or bitten by a snake,[53] is left behind on an island for ten years during the campaign against Troy.[54] His company could not stand his lamentations from his constant agony and the terrible smell of his wound. Philoctetes became a stock figure in representations of grief and suffering in antiquity, as seen in Sophocles' play of the same name. Theodectes (4th century BCE) wrote a play called *Philoctetes*, presenting him as someone struggling bravely with his sufferings. However, his bravery was not complete, due to one sentence he uttered: "Let me cut off the hand." These words betrayed Philoctetes and disclosed a failing in bravery. His awareness of bodily pains as such did not call his courage into question, but his breaking silence did.

Philoctetes figures in many discussions on bravery and courage, often embodying a womanish attitude when confronted with pain. Cicero considers it a disgrace, not to be bothered by the pain, but to cry out (*clamore*) like Philoctetes did (*Fin.* 2.19.94); doing that is equivalent to showing womanish weakness in pain (*effeminari virum vetant in dolore*). It is simply not manly (*viri non esse*, cf. *Tusc.* 2.14.33).[55] Here we see that the story of Philoctetes has become a stereotype that also includes exaggerations.

As for dying in silence, this also echoes Socrates' death in *Phaedo*. Plato's description of the moment in which Socrates drained the cup of hemlock (*Phaed* 117c–e: "he raised the cup to his lips and very cheerfully and quietly (εὐχερῶς καὶ εὐκόλως) drained it") forms a backdrop for this discussion. As pointed out above, suffering from pain itself was seen as *propatheia*, which changed into passion (*patheia*) through the breaking of silence. Philoctetes became a stock figure for this transition. By pointing out the silence of Jesus, Origen thereby presents him as conforming with *propatheia*. Jesus' prayer to

52 Clivaz, *L'ange et la sueur de sang*, 355–58 and her "'A Sweat like Drops of Blood' (Luke 22:44): At the Crossing of Intertextual Reading and Textual Criticism," www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/Clivaz_Sweat.pdf, 18–21.

53 The traditions on Philotectes give various reasons for his wound.

54 *Il.* 2.718; *Od.* 3.190; 8.219.

55 There are contradictory voices though, as for example in the tragedies; see Clivaz, "'A Sweat like Drops of Blood,' " 19–20. It is also worth noting the famously wailing Achilles; see Clivaz, *L'Ange et la sueur de sang*, 354–55. See also the chapter on Eudocia's cento in the present study.

avoid the cup was Origen's main challenge, though, and this prayer represents the core of Celsus' critique.

### 4.3 Masculinity Negotiated

As pointed out above, Origen's response reflects the critique he confronts. Key terms in his response are, therefore, pathways to the nature of that criticism. We observed above that Origen in *Cels*. 2.24 responds by saying that a close reading of the garden episode demonstrates that the Jesus who faced death was both prepared (παρασκευή) and courageous (εὐτονία).[56] This noun and its cognates means courage or courageous, and usually refers to the hardened bodies of men and masculine endurance.[57] In *Phocion* 3.5, when Plutarch compares Cato and Phocion in a physiognomy-inspired description. εὐτονία is included among their virtues. The important characteristics are manliness (ἀνδρεία) and being fearless (ἀφοβία). This finds affirmation in Plato's *Laws* 791a–c and 815a, where manliness (ἀνδρεία) and overcoming fright and fear (δείματα τε καὶ φόβους) appear as a result of exercising the body;[58] 815a has the adjective εὔτονος. Lucian speaks very much in the same vein as Socrates in *Demonax* 4. His philosophical and physical exercises hardened his body for endurance (πρὸς καρτερίας, for this term see below). The aim of athletic training, preparing for the ἀγών, is to make the body εὔτονος, says Lucian (*Anach*. 24). This enables men to overcome hardships of all kinds, including fear. In Socrates' case this made him depart life voluntary, thus leaving behind a great reputation among the Greeks.

Dion of Prusa, nicknamed Chrysostomos, portrays the athlete Melanchomas in his *Or*. 28 and 29, a depiction highly relevant as an example of how bodily beauty is accompanied by the beauties of the soul. Beauty, manliness (ἀνδρεία), courage, and virtues, particularly in terms of enduring various kinds of hardships, compose the picture of the ideal athlete (cf. *Anach*. 12, 20): "His soul vied (φιλονικῆσαι) with his body and strove to make herself the means of his winning a greater renown" (*Or*. 29.9).[59] This is, on a par with his bodily strength and beauty, an expression of his manliness (ἀνδρεία). As Jason König has pointed out, Melanchomas' external *agones* form a metaphorical link to the *agôn* he

56 SC 132:350:42.

57 LSJ s.v.

58 The contrast is fear (φόβος) and being a coward (δειλία).

59 This corroborates the observations made about ethical physiognomy in Chapter 2.

had to fight within himself.[60] Furthermore, this observation paves the way for bridging the encomium of Melanchomas' and Dio's athletic-critical Isthmian speeches in *Or.* 8 and 9, where the philosopher's *agôn* is cast as superior to that of the athletes:

> Many and mighty antagonists have I vanquished, not like these slaves who are now running, but more difficult in every way—I mean poverty, exile, and disrepute; yes, and anger, pain (λύπην), desire (ἐπιθυμίαν), fear (φόβον), and the most redoubtable beast of all, treacherous and cowardly, I mean pleasure (ὕπουλον καὶ μαλθακόν, ἡδονήν). (*Or.* 9.12 [Cohoon, LCL])[61]

Against this background, Origen's use of παρασκευή is evocative. This term may be used for preparing for battle or ἀγών in general, more or less synonymously with ἀσκέω and cognates.[62] Origen thus draws on terms firmly at home in discourses on masculinity. By rounding off the theme of Jesus' agony in this way, he likely guides us to the very nature of Celsus' critique, which is about Jesus acting like a coward and lacking in masculinity; in short, being effeminate.

We noted above that Origen claimed that Jesus demonstrated καρτερία during his sufferings. The noun καρτερία recapitulates the masculinity discourse addressed at many places above. Exercise brings endurance (καρτερία), says the Socrates of Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.6.7). In *Cyr.* 8.8.15, Xenophon says that boys of his time were more effeminate (θρυπτικώτεροι) than Cyrus, a fact seen in their lack of traditional παιδεία and ἐγκράτεια, self-mastery or self-control. They keep up the μαλακία (effeminacy or softness) of the Medes, leaving behind the καρτερία of the Persians. This is very much how Aristotle defines καρτερία in *Eth. nic.* 1150b; ἐγκράτεια is synonymous and μαλακία marks the opposite. Overcoming pleasures and pains owes a great deal to the question of gender, according to Aristotle. Walter Grundmann points out that καρτερία appears frequently in 4 Maccabees about the endurance of the seven young martyrs, which is a noble example of masculine virtues,[63] as has been confirmed in the present study (Chapter 3).

In Plato's Socratic dialogue *Laches*, there is an extensive discussion on the nature of courage (καρτερία); *Lach.* 194a demonstrates how intimately

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60 Jason König, *Athletics and Literature in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 139–157.

61 These terms imply softness as well; see LSJ s.v.

62 See LSJ s.v.; Xenophon, *Cyr.* 1.6.18; 1.6.41; 2.1.20; 8.1.34.

63 Walter Grundmann, "καρτερέω," *TDNT* 3:617; see 4 Macc 9:8.28; 10:1.11; 13:11; 14:9, in all of which καρτερία and its cognates appear.

καρτερία and ἀνδρεία are connected. The point of departure is the question of the usefulness for men to be trained in armor (ἐν ὅπλοις, *Lach*. 179a; 181c). Standing at one's post and not fleeing (μὴ φεύγοι) reveals a man as courageous (ἀνδρεῖος, *Lach*. 190e). The role of Socrates in this dialogue is to negotiate this claim; he extends manliness by saying that it is really about how the cardinal vices (λύπη, φόβος, ἐπιθυμία, ἡδονή) are mastered (*Lach*. 191d). As the dialogue continues, it becomes clear that courage or manliness (ἀνδρεία) is very much a matter of having the knowledge to discern between what is and is not to be dreaded (*Lach*. 195a). Hence, the dialogue closes (201c) with the need to receive instruction and παιδεία.[64] Courage is very much a matter of wisdom, learning, and virtue (194d; 200c); it is defined in this dialogue as knowledge of what is to be dreaded or dared (τὴν τῶν δεινῶν καὶ θαρραλέων ἐπιστήμην, 195a–b; 198a–b; 199b) and how to act in situations of both pleasure (ἐν ἡδονῇ) and pain (ἐν λύπῃ, 192b).

Read against this background, Origen's response may well be a response to what Celsus elsewhere emphasizes, namely the lack of education on the part of the Christians as representative of the nature of Christian doctrine.[65] Looking into some key terminology in Origen's text brings out two important observations pertaining to the content of Celsus' criticism. In the first place, we are guided to a contest centered on masculinity and self-mastery. Masculinity is something achieved through performance, and the question under dispute is whether or not Jesus performed appropriately by those lights. Here Celsus and Origen part ways.[66] Furthermore, the question of proper learning lurks in the background as an integral part of masculinity discourse. Celsus and Origen form another example of what Marianne Bjelland Kartzow has worked out as the background for the polemics in the Pastoral Epistles, the importance of gendered language in such settings. The author of the Pastoral Epistles construes his opponents' speech as feminine "in order to make them lose influence and appear dishonorable."[67] This practice is also extensively witnessed in Christians' debunking their opponents more generally.[68]

64 Plato *Resp*. 390d is about what kind of instruction will benefit the youth, reporting that telling them about "deeds of endurance (καρτερίαι)" is most beneficial.

65 Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 149–57.

66 See Chapter 14 of the present study.

67 Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, *Gossip and Gender: Othering of Speech in the Pastoral Epistles* (BZNW 164; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 193–94.

68 See also Jennifer Larson, "Paul's Masculinity," *JBL* 123 (2004): 85–97, which argues that Paul's opponents in the Corinthian correspondence did likewise.

## 4.4 Drawing Celsus Together

The core of Celsus' critique is fourfold. In the first place, Jesus shows the moral character of a coward. His fear of death, his hiding, and his attempt to escape reveal a man performing in a way that renders his ministry and message for naught. The lack of correspondence between message and performance reveals him as nothing but a deceiver unable to master his desires. Moral and philosophical ideals and rhetorical standards provide arguments for this part of Celsus' critique.

In the second place, Jesus' performance is womanish; he fails to comply with ideals of masculinity when faced with pain and fear. He did not endure what was expected of a true man. Masculinity or manliness is never explicitly referred to in the passages on Jesus' agony addressed above, but the lexical meaning of key terms points clearly in that direction. In Celsus' presentation of Jesus' death on the cross, this gender perspective does become apparent: "even a drunk old woman (γραῦς) would have been ashamed to sing such a tale to lull a little child to sleep" (*Cels*. 6.37[69] cf. 6.34[70]). Celsus' critique of Jesus' agony in Gethsemane is merely a prelude to how he viewed his shameful death on the cross.[71] Obviously, the potential lexical meaning of particular terms cannot without further study be imported into any texts where this term occurs, or one is guilty of James Barr's "fallacy of totality transfer".[72] Nevertheless, there are some observations in favor of doing so in this particular case. The same kind of terminology appears in key passages addressed above. The lexical findings correspond to Celsus' critique of Christians generally as being an effeminate group attracting mostly women and children, most famously stated in *Cels*. 3.55 on the proselytizing of women and children[73] and "the hysterical female" (γυνὴ πάροιστρος) who witnessed the empty tomb (*Cels*. 2.55[74] cf. 2.59; 2.70).[75] Finally, this gender perspective finds affirmation in how ancients viewed mastery of the passions more generally, as observed throughout the present study.

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69 SC 147:268.17–21.

70 SC 147:262.17–19.

71 Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism*, 50–54.

72 J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

73 Christian faith attracted people of no education, such as women; see also *Cels*. 3.44; 3.48; 3.49; 3.50; 3.52. It is worth observing that the gender issue and the critique of a lack of *paideia* often appear together.

74 SC 132:414.19.

75 See Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 94–120.

In the third place, Jesus, like his followers, was not a man of culture and proper education. All the above-mentioned observations together form convincing proofs that question the divinity of Jesus. Clearly, Celsus and Origen have conflicting views on divinity. The obvious shibboleth is the implications of the incarnation. As Cook puts it: "Celsus views Jesus as a Greek god who does not experience pain. Origen views Jesus as capable of all human feelings."[76]

This takes us to Origen's point of view, which reveals a fourth aspect of Celsus' critique. Origen argues that the incident in Gethsemane is composed of two main dicta, the cup saying and Jesus' obedience to his Father, that constitute his human and divine natures, respectively. Origen accuses Celsus of looking exclusively at the first and deliberately ignoring the second, thus demonstrating that the Gethsemane scene was intimately connected with Christology. The incarnation, Jesus becoming human, was to benefit humanity and is thus truly altruistic. Furthermore, Origen charges Celsus with exaggeration by claiming that Jesus hid and even tried to escape. Three different opinions held among people who claim to be Christians appear in Origen's response: first is his own position, then those he considers heretical (apparently Docetists), and finally those who take the agony as Jesus' reaction to the future tribulations that the Jews will suffer for having caused his death. That observation itself is worth considering, since it attests to a vivid discourse on this particular scene from the life of Jesus, and Origen proves himself familiar with all three views.

### 4.5 A Roman Emperor Evaluates Gethsemane: Julian the Apostate

This energetic polemicist against Christian doctrine naturally found the Gethsemane scene an easy target;[77] a fragment addressing directly the agony has been preserved.[78] As Cook points out,[79] Julian's critique is twofold.

76 Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism*, 50.

77 For a general introduction to Julian and the Christians, see Hargis, *Against the Christians*, 91–105. Hargis' book is general and does not offer much material on how either Celsus nor Julian viewed specific New Testament traditions.

78 According to Wilmer Cave Wright's LCL edition Fragment 4 (Vol. 3 pp. 430–31). The fragment is found in Theodore of Mopsuestia (PG 66.724b); see also *Giuliano Imperatore Contra Galilaeos: Introduzione, testo critic e traduzione* (ed. Emanuela Masaracchia; Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1990), in which it is Fragment 95 (p. 186).

79 Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism*, 297–98.

### 4.5.1 *Source Criticism*

First, the Emperor targets the agony scene as such, while also questioning this event from a source-critical point of view. Both observations proceed in particular from the longer, Lukan version.[80] As for the latter, Julian points out that Luke has no sources or witnesses on which to base his narrative, if it really happened at all, as the Emperor puts it. The gospel tradition betrays itself by having those present fall asleep. Naturally, they could not witness the angel appearing to Jesus while they were asleep. John, the only gospel author who was present, knew nothing of it, so the angel is not mentioned in John's Gospel. This source-critical argument occupies most of the fragment.[81] Theodore of Mopsuestia responded to Julian's critique on this point,[82] surmising that the disciples could have learned about the angel from Jesus after the resurrection. John altered a great many stories, so his testimony is ambivalent here. He surmises that the disciples may have slept only during parts of the session in the garden, and, finally, it was full moon that night and everything was visible (PG 66.715–28). Having quoted Julian from the fragment noted above, Theodore refutes him (PG 66.724b–25c). He immediately says that it is not a sign of manliness and wisdom *not* to fear what is really fearful. Jesus feared death as a true human being; Theodore insists that this is a dispute involving masculinity.

### 4.5.2 *Irony*

According to Julian, the story has an irony attached to it: God is in need of help, and eventually finds assistance with one of his subordinates, an angel.[83] Like Celsus, Julian also draws on Gethsemane in discussions of Jesus' divinity,[84] although Celsus does not make that particular observation. Julian's choice of Luke's longer version is worth observing. We will later see how precisely these verses by recent interpreters have been taken to convey a heroic picture of Jesus fighting like an athlete.[85] Against that background, it is worth observing

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80 Tjitze Baarda, "Luke 22:42–47a: The Emperor Julian as a Witness to the Text of Luke," *NovT* 30 (1988): 289–96.

81 On the question of Gethsemane and witnesses, see Barbara Saunderson, "Gethsemane: The Missing Witness," *Bib* 79 (1989): 224–33, who finds that the question of the presence of witnesses has been addressed in too narrow a fashion; one misconception is that the garden was a remote and lonely place in the midst of a crowded Passover time.

82 Baarda, "Luke 22:42–47a," 296.

83 We may remind ourselves of the role assigned to the angels in Heb 1–2 as the subordinates of Jesus.

84 Baarda, "Luke 22:42–47a," 291 points out that this incident in Jesus' life came into play in the Arian controversies.

85 Most clearly, Sterling, "Mors Philosophi," 395–97.

that this biblical passage did not occur in such a way to this ancient critic of that particular text.

As for the scene itself, Julian says that Jesus prays in a way characteristic of "a pitiful wretch (ἄθλιος) who cannot bear misfortune with serenity (εὐκόλως), and though he is a god, he is reassured by an angel." In a moral context, ἄθλιος refers to someone in a miserable state.[86] In pejorative texts like this, the term is properly rendered a wretch to be blamed for failing to bear misfortunes. The term indicates degradation, as can be seen in the fragment of the Comic Philemon: νόσον πολὺ κρεῖττόν ἐστιν ἢ λύπην φέρειν. θανεῖν κράτιστόν ἐστιν ἢ ζῆν ἀθλίως (PCG VII.171 p. 309, "suffering from sickness is much better than carrying sorrow. Dying is certainly better than living like a wretch").[87] Julian's point is that a miserable situation makes the person vulnerable to being controlled by passion. Jesus found himself in such a situation and the cup prayer demonstrates that he failed to stand by his *propatheia*,[88] exchanging it instead for passions. He was not able to bear his misfortune.

### 4.5.3 *Enslaved by Passion*

Jesus performed poorly when faced with suffering and thus failed to comply with fundamental characteristics of true divinity (*CGal.* 171d–e), which is above all freedom from passion (δίχα πάθους/ἐν ἀπαθείᾳ). This introduces an idea about divinity that many contemporary Christians shared[89] and that made both the agony and the cup prayer hurdles to be climbed. In his *Banquet of the Caesars*, Julian portrays both Constantine and Jesus in terms taken from the traditional belly critique and physiognomy levelled against pleasure-seekers.[90] The issue of Jesus' divinity and his failure to master his desires is really the bottom line of the logic that also characterizes the Julian fragment under study.

John Granger Cook has drawn attention to Aristotle's *Eth. nic.* 1100b–1101a as helpful for interpreting Julian's critique:

> Even in adversity nobility shines through, when a man endures repeated and severe misfortune with patience (φέρῃ τις εὐκόλως πολλὰς καὶ μεγάλας

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86 For example Plutarch, *Ant.* 35.1–4, where Octavia uses this term for herself as she finds herself squeezed between two imperators, her brother Octavianus and her husband Antonius.

87 My translation.

88 See Chapter 2.5.3 and 18 in the present study.

89 See Chapters 4.1.4; 12.2–4; 16; 17.3; 18.3 and 20.6 of the present study.

90 Sandnes, "Christian Baptism as Seen by Outsiders," 504–508; see Baarda, "Luke 22:42–47a," 295–96.

> ἀτυχίας), not owing to ostensibility, but from generosity and greatness of soul (μεγαλόψυχος) … the truly good and wise man will bear (φέρειν) all kinds of fortune in a seemly way (εὐσχημόνως). … And this being so the happy man (ὁ εὐδαίμων) can never become miserable (ἄθλιος); though it is true he will not be supremely blessed if he encounters the misfortunes of Priam.

Cook's observation deserves further elaboration. Aristotle contrasts happiness and being miserable. This contrast implies, however, a threefold distinction: happiness, being miserable, and something in between them, the need to bear misfortunes, which in effect is equivalent to *propatheia*. The example of Priam, the Homeric king of Troy who suffered terrible losses including not only the war but also his eldest son Hector and other family members, serves to point out this intermediate state. In antiquity, he became a stock figure of a miserable person. According to Aristotle, being miserable is really not about being a victim, but about how one deals with circumstances; discernment again comes into play. The immediate context of this citation makes it abundantly clear that happiness and being miserable are not matters of fortune (τύχη), but of virtue, thus reminding us that manliness was a matter of *becoming* through displaying virtues.

This Aristotelian text against which we read Julian' Gethsemane critique very much accords with the Socratic legacy outlined in Chapter 2. According to Xenophon (*Mem*. 4.8.1–3), there is no record of a more noble death. Socrates lived for thirty days after being convicted, and "he continued to live exactly as before; and in truth before that time he had been admired above all men for his cheerfulness and serenity (εὐθύμως τε καὶ εὐκόλως ζῆν)." The way he bore the sentence of death is an example of manliness (ἀνδρωδέστατα) to Xenophon. This finds corroboration in Plato's description of the moment at which Socrates drained the cup of hemlock (*Phaedo* 117c–e): "he raised the cup to his lips and very cheerfully and quietly (εὐχερῶς καὶ εὐκόλως) drained it." His friends were unable to restrain their tears for being deprived of such a friend. All those present, except Socrates, cried. His reaction is telling as to our search to understand the nature of the polemics against Jesus' agony: "What conduct is this, you strange men! I sent the women away chiefly for this reason, that they might not behave in this absurd way; for I have heard that it is best to die in silence (εὐφημίᾳ).[91] Keep quiet and be brave (καρτερεῖτε)."[92]

91 Socrates reverberates throughout ideals of facing death silently.

92 See Chapters 2.2.3 and 4.2 of the present study.

This text brings together many aspects observed above with Celsus and demonstrates that Julian's critique is voiced in accordance with well-established patterns and ideals. His polemical terms are at home in the rhetoric of defining courageous masculinity. Hence, it has proven helpful to delve into the terminology used by Julian, particularly since the terminology applied serves as a pointer to a rhetorical topos of masculinity, death, fear, and the legacy of Socrates. Without being expressly stated, it is implied that divinity and masculinity are related.[93]

## 4.6 The Anonymous Philosopher in *Apocriticus*

The remains of the work commonly called *Apocriticus* have preserved the most detailed critique levelled against Christianity from antiquity, written during the time of Valens (364–78).[94] Macarius of Magnesia's *Response or the Only Begotten to the Greeks concerning Questions and Answers in the Gospel*[95] presents itself as a contest (ἀγών) between the Christian author Macarius[96] and his opponent, as clearly seen for example in the narrative prologue to Book 3.1–2 (51):

> This is the third contest (τρίτον...ἀγῶνα) which our much admired opponent prepared for us, after bringing a notable assembly of auditors. This, dear Theosthenes, we now unfold to your incomparable wisdom, relating to the best of our power the propositions which were the results of this reflection. When we had found a quiet spot, we spent a great deal of the day in discussion (διαλεγόμενοι). He began to roll down upon us

93 Cf. Chapter 20.5.1 of the present study.

94 *Macarios de Magnésie: Le Monogénès, Édition Critique et Traduction Française I. Introduction Génerale* (ed. and tr. Richard Goulet; Textes et Traditions 7, Paris: J. Vrin, 2003), 57–65.

95 *Macarios de Magnésie: Le Monogénès, Édition Critique et Traduction Française II. Édition Critique, Traduction et Commentaire* (ed. and tr. Richard Goulet; Textes et Traditions 7, Paris: J. Vrin, 2003) has replaced Blondel-Fouchardt from 1876. A partial translation into English is available in *The Apocriticus of Macarios Magnes* (tr. T.W. Crafer. Translations of Christian Literature Series I. Greek Texts; London: The Macmillan Company, 1919). Crafer's text is available on the Internet.

96 As for the identity of the author, see the discussion in Benedict C. Sheehy, *The Arguments of Apocriticus: A Re-Evaluation of the Apology of Macarius Magnes* (Ph.D. diss., Wilfried Laurier University: 1989, http://scholars.wlu.ca/etd/101). Following Crafer, Sheehy raises doubts as to whether Macarius, Bishop of Magnesia around 400 CE, is really the author.

> the loftiness of his Attic oratory, so that the mighty throng of onlookers almost felt themselves joining in the contest, as they saw the terror of his wrath, which was meant to scare us away. Then as though he were descending on us at a run from some hill, he threw us into consternation by troubling us with the force of his tongue.[97]

The Greek title introducing the work refers to ζητήματα καὶ λύσεις, which puts this work into the genre of zetetic literature, known both from ancient schools and Philo's *Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus*.[98] The title indicates a pedagogical text aimed at instruction, but the dialogical style and the ἀγών motif combine to make it apologetic. This literary style or genre brings to mind Justin's *Dialogue with Tryphon* and Octavius *Dialogue with Minucius Felix*. It is, of course, a matter of dispute whether these dialogues are real or fictional. The present dialogue is most likely fictitious, due to the fact that there is no real development in it.[99] The objector never replies, so there is really no exchange present. In any case, the genre itself is a reminder that Christians were involved on a continual basis in intellectual discussions over their faith, their traditions, and their texts.

This piece of work is a narrated version of a previous dialogue, fictional or otherwise, addressed to a Theosthenes. Each of the five books is introduced with questions to be addressed (τὸ κεφάλαιον) that introduce the topics, thus giving the basic elenctic structure of the text. The adversary is clearly a philosophically trained Greek who is also well versed in the Christian tradition and the New Testament.

Macarius of Magnesia, or whoever the author is, has obviously used an anti-Christian source to be opposed in his work, although he has shaped it and at times even altered it. Much ink has been spilled in trying to identify his adversary, with the most likely candidate being Porphyry (born 234 CE) or Hierocles (late 3rd and early 4th century CE). Since Adolf von Harnack's work in 1911,[100] many scholars consider Porphyry, or at least a compilation of his texts, to be the most likely candidate: "Un philosophe et un savant engagé

97 Crafer's translation with some alterations.

98 Maren R. Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 38–74, 137–41, 152–63, 177–85.

99 Thus also Sheehy, *The Arguments of Apocriticus*, 42; Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism*, 168–75.

100 *Kritik des Neuen Testaments von einem Griechischen Philosophen des 3. Jahrhunderts: Die im Apocriticus des Macarius Magnes Enthaltene Streitschrift* (ed. and tr. Adolf von Harnack; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1911), 1–17.

dans la confrontation culturelle avec le christianisme se cache donc derrière ces objections et, s'il faux choisir un nom, aucun ne s'impose avec autant de vraisemblance que celui de Porphyre."[101] Although the adversary of this text dates from the 3rd century, given that Porphyry is the shadowy figure lurking in Macarius' text, it is clear that "on peut tout au plus rappeler qu'elle est en pleine continuité avec la tradition philosophique grecque telle que l'a modelée Platon."[102] From this, as Goulet has pointed out,[103] it follows that there is a certain continuity among all the major ancient opponents of Christianity from Celsus to Hierocles, Porphyry, Julian, and the anonymous philosopher of Lactantius.[104] These critics were able to formulate what had already been in the air for some time. Compared to the adversary, much less interest has been shown in the defense or response. Since my interest is not only on polemics but also on how Christians interpreted Jesus' agony in Gethsemane, the focus here will shift to a certain extent. As in the presentation of Celsus, the respondent may serve to enlighten key points in the accusations, although the responses also have independent value as indicators of participation in a genuine Christian discourse.

## 4.7 How is a Wise and Divine Man Supposed to Appear?

The point of departure is the question of the worthy appearance of a wise and divine man, raised in *Apocriticus* 3.1–2 (52.1–53.2) as an accusation and responded to in 3.8.1–13 (64–67). Two objections are combined; Jesus' appearance in front of Pilate and his prayer in Gethsemane. Jesus did not seize the opportunity to address Pilate in words able to make both Pilate and those present "better men" (παιδεύσαι καὶ βελτίους ἐργάσασθαι). The implication is that Jesus did not stand up to the test when compared to the philosophers, instead allowing himself to be insulted. This failure is compared to Apollonius of Tyana who spoke boldly (μετὰ παρρησίας) to Emperor Domitian, as recounted in

101 See *Macarios de Magnésie I* (ed. and tr. Goulet), 143–49; quotation on p. 149. Sheehy, *The Arguments of Apocriticus*, 195–99 reiterates Crafer's arguments in favour of Hierocles. R. Joseph Hoffmans's translation of Apocriticus under the title *Porphyry's Against the Christians: The Literary Remains* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1994) 22, 40–41 argues that Porphyry is the authentic source. Clivaz, "'A Sweat like Drops of Blood,'" 23 n. 83 rightly says that authenticity is of lesser importance, as the opinion expressed is in any case pagan.

102 Goulet, *Macarios de Magnésie I* (ed. and tr. Goulet), 111.

103 Goulet, *Macarios de Magnésie I* (ed. and tr. Goulet), 112–49.

104 See also Goulet, *Macarius de Magnésie I* (ed. and tr. Goulet), 261–91.

Philostratus (*Vit. Apoll.* 8.5–50).[105] At this point, silence is not the point, but speaking *boldly*. The implied adversary is clearly familiar with Christian tradition, since he recognizes that Christ might have died according to a divine plan or command. Be that as it may, he says that Jesus should, nevertheless, have endured his passion with boldness (οὐ μὴν ἄνευ παρρησίας), uttering words of force and wisdom (σπουδαῖά τινα σοφὰ) to Pilate. Instead, he accepted being mocked like any gutter-snipe (χῦδαῖος).[106]

The derogatory meaning of χῦδαῖος[107] is obvious; it denotes vulgarity or a debased life and implies a lack of education or rusticity, the opposite of erudition.[108] *Apocriticus* 2.25.2 (23) on Mary Magdalene confirms this, as she is described in similar terms. She came from a miserable town and was possessed by seven demons. Neither Mary nor Jesus belonged to the company of those with culture. The weak performance of Jesus in front of Pilate finds in the Christian defense of Macarius its explanation in Old Testament prophecies. Many passages are quoted, among which Isaiah 53 holds pride of place.

The accusation about Jesus' poor performance in front of Pilate paves the way for accusations regarding his agony in Gethsemane in 3.1–2 (53). The agony scene is clearly a continuation of the contrasting comparison with Apollonius, as clearly stated in Goguel's translation of the opening sentence (Οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ κἀκεῖνο): "Ce n'est pas tout!" which may be rendered "moreover"[109] or "furthermore." The critique follows this course:

> Moreover, there is another saying which is full of obscurity (ἀσάφεια), completely lacking in culture (μεστὸν δ' ἀπαιδευσίας),[110] spoken by Jesus to his disciples. He said: "Fear not those who kill the body," and yet he himself, when in agony (ἀγωνιῶν) sleepless (ἐπαγρυπνῶν) in expectation

105 For a more nuanced view of Apollonius in this literature, see *Apocriticus* 3.8.10 (66).

106 *Porphyry's Against the Christians* (tr. Hoffmann), 40 renders this in the following way: "Being made fun of like a peasant boy in the big city." *Kritik* (ed. and tr. Von Harnack), 33 has "wie einer aus der Hefe des Volkes." *Macarios de Magnésie II*. (ed. and tr. Goulet), 73 has "railler comme un vaurien du carrefour."

107 LSJ s.v. This word also appears in Julian the Apostate's polemic against the Galileans; see Sandnes, "Christian Baptism as Seen by Outsiders," 512.

108 It brings to mind Celsus' critique of the Christians where vulgarity and lack of erudition appear together; see Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 149–57.

109 Thus *Apocriticus* (tr. Crafer), 57.

110 This noun amounts to stupidity, as is seen in how Celsus uses this idea in his invective rhetoric against Christians; see Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 149–57. I have not embraced that translation since it is important to bring out that a lack of philosophical training and culture is essential to the critique involved.

> of terrible things, prayed that his suffering (τὸ πάθος) might pass by him (παρελθεῖν, Matt 26:41), saying to his friends: "Stay awake and pray, so that the temptation may not overcome (παρέλθῃ ἡμας ὁ πειρασμός) us." For such words are not worthy of God's Son (παιδὸς θεοῦ); not even a wise man despising death.[111]

According to this rendering, the pagan critic proceeds from a harmony of Matthew and Luke's Gospels and focuses on the obscurity and lack of coherence and *paideia* in Jesus. What Jesus did conflicts with his teachings elsewhere. This passage picks up on the confusing picture rendered by the gospels, due primarily to the Gethsemane incident. Teaching his disciples one thing and acting otherwise when it comes to himself leaves a picture of Jesus as morally deficient. The contradiction between word and deed is grounded in selfishness; in speaking to the disciples, Jesus follows commonly held ideals, but his agony and the cup prayer epitomize the fearful coward. The Jesus unable to sleep embodies his fear of death and is a detail that must be seen against the backdrop of Socrates, who peacefully fell asleep the night before his death (*Crito* 43b). This detail draws on the topic of silence and dying courageously. The last sentence brings Celsus to mind. Jesus not only failed to meet the standards of a true deity; he did not even appear to be a wise man (*Cels*. 2.76). The same categories also appear in *Apocriticus* 3.1 (52), who states that Jesus could have confronted Pilate in words characteristic either of a true deity or of a man of wisdom, but failed on both counts. Furthermore, Jesus taught his disciples to avoid temptations, which is indirectly tantamount to protect them from things that may develop their character. The *paideia* perspective thus looms large in this critique.

## 4.8 A Response Mirroring Accusations

Macarius introduces his response to these accusations (3.9.1–18, 68–73) by first reiterating the hub of the critique (3.9.1, 69), which may be summarized as follows. First, Jesus is accused of obscurity and inconsistency. His behavior in Gethsemane was contradictory in belying his previous words about death and courage. Jesus' words to his disciples as he sends them out (Matt 10:28 cf. Luke 12:4) about not fearing those who may kill the body are a standard with which Jesus himself failed to comply. Second, he feared death (αὐτὸν φοβεῖσθαι τοῦ

111 My own translation with some help from *Apocriticus* (tr. Crafer) and Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism*, 194.

θανάτου), placing the cup prayer at the center of the critique. Jesus prayed for his deliverance from a situation of despair (αὐτὸς δ᾽ ἐν ἐπιτάσει πολλῇ):[112] "From what he says, he demonstrates large obscurity (πολλὴν ἀπὸ τῆς λέξεως ἔχει τὴν ἀσάφειαν)."

### 4.8.1 *Obscurity and Ignorance*

The noun ἀσάφεια holds an important place in the critiques cited and echoed in *Apocriticus*. According to 2.26.6 (25), the gospels are all full of "obscurities."[113] In itself this term refers to lack of clarity.[114] Crafer renders this "obscure nonsense," which, according to the accusation, is "tolerable for women, and not for men (γυναίοις, οὐκ ἀνδράσι)," thus indicating that obscurity has both moral and gender aspects.[115] Obscurity in this passage refers to a lack of accuracy (ἀκριβέστερον) in the stories found in the gospels and to their contradictory nature.[116]

The way Jesus in Gethsemane confuses the larger portrayal given of himself elsewhere in the gospels makes it a prominent example of such obscurities. In Gethsemane the obscurity is part of Jesus' inconsistency and wavering. It follows that Jesus' agony pertains to the question of his morality as well.[117] Similarly, in *Apocriticus* 4.30.6–7 (221) ἀσάφεια is connected with ignorance (ἄγνοιᾷ). The fact that obscurity of the stories and Jesus' own moral standard appear together is not surprising; they are two sides of one coin. A person lacking in knowledge is unlikely to produce stories different from the qualities he himself embodies.

*Apocriticus* 2.23.6 (21) levels accusations of inconsistency with regard to what Jesus, according to the gospels, said while he was crucified. The discordance between on the one hand "Into your hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46) and "It is finished" (John 19:30) and on the other hand "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46) prove this obscurity. This is addressed as a matter of lack of clarity and distinctiveness (τὸ σαφὲς), hence ἀσάφεια. Such accusations of inconsistencies in the gospels are easily given a personal and moral bent: Jesus is not trustworthy. Likewise in *Apocriticus*

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112 This noun refers to intensive emotions; see LSJ s.v. *Macarios de Magnésie II* (ed. and tr. Goulet), where this is rendered "dans une tension extrême."

113 Thus also the narrative prologue to Book 4 (157).

114 LSJ s.v.

115 Obscurity is also connected to women in 4.8.1–2 (166).

116 Thus also in the narrative prologue to Book 4.

117 Consistency is intimately associated with the virtuous man, as we have seen with regard both to Socrates and the Maccabean martyrs.

3.30.1–12 (125) charges of not being consistent are made against Paul the Apostle, based clearly on what he says in 1 Cor 9:20–21; hence he too is not trustworthy. Jesus was a hypocrite and a liar who reveals himself in obscurities. Such is the portrayal of Jesus in Gethsemane to which Macarius responds.

In one sentence, Macarius brings these accusations together: πῶς ἠγωνίασε τὸ πάθος, clearly inspired by the longer Lukan version, as the appearance of the ἀγών motif indicates. Goulet renders the opening statement in this way: "Quant on fait que (le Christ) fut angoissé devant la Passion … (πῶς ἠγωνίασε τὸ πάθος)" (3.9.1 (69)). His translation unduly narrows the perspective. It is possible that πάθος simply refers to Jesus' passion as it certainly does in most passages in *Apocriticus*.[118] However, in some places πάθος implies desires and corporeal passions (3.12.11 (82); 3.41.5 (141); 4.25.24 (210)). The ambiguity is worth considering: the way Jesus appeared in the passion is proof that he was a man unable to master his desires. Goulet's "before the Passion" is an insertion and has no correspondence in the Greek text; the noun πάθος is simply the accusative form of the verb "to fight." This verb does not favor a claim that πάθος primarily refers to the passion. It makes better sense as a reference to *how* Jesus struggled during his passion. I take this to mean that πάθος has kept the nuance of desire or passion here, specifically the passion to escape death, as it is unfolded in the introductory lines of the response. In the introduction, Macarius thus makes the agony refer not to the combat of the entire passion but to Jesus' being afraid of dying, which is a prelude to the larger battle with the devil. An ambiguity in πάθος brings about how this works in his text.

### 4.8.2 *Yes, There is Obscurity*

In *Apocriticus* 3.9.2 (69), Macarius directly opposes the critique. He admits that obscurity in the passages regarding Gethsemane implies inconsistencies when seen more generally from the gospels. This in turn implies that Macarius is aware that this story appears to some as an anti-text in the gospels. The obscurities have a purpose, though, and the solution is found not in the wording of the biblical text as an outward phenomenon but in looking beneath that surface. This is to act like wise physicians who judge herbs not by their external appearances, but who search what is hidden, for those things that are useful. The idea of "usefulness" appears here somewhat out of the norm of the argumentative and cultural context but has a long history both in Greek philosophy and its Christian adaptation.[119] What is "useful" is here judged by the measure

118 Thus in *Apocriticus* 3.9.6 (70).

119 Christian Gnilka, *CHRÊSIS: Die Methode der Kirchenväter im Umgang mit der Antiken Kultur. Der Begriff des 'rechten Gebrauches'* (Basel: Schwabe, 1984).

of God's larger plan of salvation (οἰκονομία); the context is wider than the biblical texts themselves. As we see below, this is a reference to the overall strategy or plan of God. It is a matter of finding a context within which the obscurities appear differently and in a way that makes sense. Macarius explores this useful but hidden meaning in what follows.

### 4.8.3 *Setting a Trap*

Seen from the perspective of οἰκονομία, the agony in Gethsemane is a strategy aimed at fooling the devil into a battle he is doomed to lose; Gethsemane is a kind of trap. This is the key insight that unlocks the mystery of obscurity. That the agony was a combat with the devil is a perspective inspired by the temptation scene as narrated in the gospels. The strategy takes its point of departure from Christ's two natures, the human and the divine, a topic that often comes into play when this particular scene is on the agenda. The assumption is that the devil has seen the mighty works of Christ and is, therefore, convinced that he is divine. Hence, he is also hesitant to bring about Jesus' final Passion. This reluctance puts into jeopardy God's plan to bring salvation to the world, since that plan depended on Jesus' death. To make sure that God's plan of salvation is fulfilled, Christ lays bare his manhood; he strips himself of his divinity, with the intention of fooling the devil (3.9.7 (71)). Due to this strategic plan, the agony reveals his true human nature. It follows that he only *pretended* to be afraid (φόβον ὑποκρίνεται); he acted and spoke as though he was afraid of the passion, as though his fear of death (δειλιᾷ τὸ πάθος) was real, as though he fought death (ἀγωνιᾷ τὸν θάνατον) out of weakness (τῆς ἀσθενείας). Thus Macarius is able to concede that the gospels do portray Jesus as afraid and weak, but that is only a strategy to fool the devil and ensure that God's plan will be fulfilled. It is all done to goad the devil into coming out of his lair, like a beast to be caught and killed.[120]

The noun ἀγωνία and its cognates reveal a Lukan inspiration and represent an important factor in how Jesus at prayer is considered.[121] It is clearly an athletic or military metaphor; in the midst of his weakness, Christ is depicted as a fighting and victorious athlete.[122] The athletic imagery is abundant in 3.14 (94). Jesus at Gethsemane is waging war with the devil like a soldier or athlete.[123]

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120 *Apocriticus* 2.26.1–2 (24) addresses John 12:31 about the devil's being "cast outside," which is responded to in 2.31.1–2 (37).

121 See *Apocriticus* 3.9.1 (69); 3.9.7 (71); 3.9.8 (71).

122 Cf. *Apocriticus* 3.26 (113).

123 We saw above that to Julian the Emperor, the longer Lukan version was seen as indicative of a Jesus in need of assistance. The athletic interpretation given by Macarius here finds

This response is important as it is a direct source regarding how Christians coped with the agony scene, particularly when considering a philosophically trained audience. Furthermore, it attests to the fact that Gethsemane was seen as an anti-text in need of competent and adequate commentary.

### 4.8.4 *Weakness Pretended*

In *Apocriticus* 3.9.8–9 (71–72), Macarius brings the temptation scene into the discussion. Luke 4:13 refers to the devil's leaving Jesus for a while (ἀπέστη ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἄχρι καιροῦ) and implies that the devil planned to challenge Jesus at a later occasion. For Macarius Magnes this forms a bridge between the temptation scene and Gethsemane. In both temptation scenes in which Jesus combats the devil, he pretends to be something he is not. The common denominator is that Jesus at both occasions appears to show "weakness." In the temptation scene at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus acted hungry. The first Adam became hungry, which was an opportunity for the devil to bring on his temptation (Genesis 3). Likewise, in the first temptation scene, the second Adam was also hungry (Matt 4:2; Luke 4:2), which brought upon him the temptation of the devil: "command these stones to become loaves of bread/a loaf of bread" (Matt 4:3; Luke 4:3). However, Jesus only pretended to be hungry. It was when Jesus pretended to be weak that the devil saw a golden opportunity to attack him. From this Jesus picked up a strategy that was also useful in the garden. Once again, Jesus pretended to be afraid (προσποιεῖται δειλιᾶν)[124] and thus tempted the devil to launch his attack. However, it was all orchestrated to ignite a battle in which the devil left Jesus unconquered. The merging of Luke 4 and the agony scene is very clear.

Another, more subtle allusion appears; humanity's fall was caused by a tree and fruit from that tree (Genesis 3). Jesus fasting in the desert, according to the temptation scene, made up for one of the reasons for the fall in the Garden of Eden, namely food. Hence, the situation of Genesis 3 is partially removed by Jesus in his first temptation. One concern remains and in the garden of Gethsemane, the complete restoration comes into being; Jesus fights the temptation to avoid the tree; i.e. the cross. His appearance of being afraid of that tree summoned the devil to attack him, and this brought Jesus to the tree that removed the curse of that earlier tree. The deceit once caused through a tree is now atoned for by another tree in the form of a cross. Macarius weaves

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affirmation in the interpretation favoured by Sterling, "*Mors philosophi*," 395–96 and particularly Scaer, *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death*, 126–27, who consider Jesus' struggle in Gethsemane to be against the adversary from Luke 4.

124 This is the attitude of a coward.

theological patterns of much weight and importance into his interpretation by linking the garden of Gethsemane with Jesus' combat with the devil, with the temptation scene, with the fall in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3), and with an Adamic typology.

### 4.8.5 *A Pleasant Cup*

Jesus appeared afraid, but he only pretended to be so. He was in fact eager to meet the passion and the disguise served the purpose to bring it on. Macarius now explores the implications of the cup. A true understanding of the cup is crucial to understanding the Gethsemane scene (*Apocriticus* 3.9.10–12 (72)). Jesus did not ask that the passion be removed from his fate, but that the *cup* itself be taken away; this made a major difference to Macarius. A cup always brings joy and excitement, εὐφροσύνη and not λύπη (3.11). Jesus never asked that Passion should pass him, but that *the cup* should. Macarius makes the most out of this. Jesus considered his Passion a pleasure, nectar,[125] in fact, to be sipped; this is what the appearance of "cup" conveys.

The fact that Jesus spoke of a cup, therefore, alters the meaning of the Gethsemane passage entirely. What appears as a prayer of anxiety and fear is actually an expression of his joyous expectation of what is to come upon him. The cup prayer, precisely by being about a cup, implies that Jesus really wanted his suffering to come quickly, not to pass from him: οὐχ ἵνα παρέλθῃ, ἀλλ' ἵνα τάχιον ἔλθῃ τὸ ποτήριον (3.9.10 (72)).[126] Thus the savior spoke eagerly (σπεύδων) seeking to empty the cup fast (τάχιον) and to bring upon his enemy the final blow (3.10 and 12). Jesus eagerly expected his suffering to arrive. For reasons of strategy, however, it had been postponed until the dragon had come out to be finally defeated. The weak appearance in Gethsemane was crucial to this strategy. Gethsemane was the bait, as Macarius puts it. The bait consisted of one particular word, παρελθέτω which sums up the cup prayer. This sounded like Jesus cried for mercy (ἐλεεινῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ φωνῆς). The devil then reacted as planned and thus the passion, the means by which salvation became manifest, came into being. Gethsemane is part of a well-designed divine plan to offer salvation and defeat the devil.

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125 Nectar is the food of the gods; see "Ambrosia," *Pauly-Wissowa* 1:1809–11; see e.g. *Od.* 9.359.

126 It remains a puzzle how Macarius comes to term with the fact the Jesus, in fact, prays to have the cup "pass from him," but since this is only a disguise, a pretended prayer, it does not really affect his interpretation of "cup" here.

### 4.8.6 *The Bait: Jesus' Humanity*

In *Apocriticus* 3.9.13–17 (72–73), Macarius begins an illustration that gradually becomes somewhat muddled, as it grows out of a rather complex scriptural interpretation. This passage is aimed at providing scriptural support for the idea that the Gethsemane scene works as bait in the plan of bringing down the devil. Macarius introduces an analogy to illustrate the strategy of Gethsemane, capturing an animal hidden in a cage by enticing it to come out. Similarly, the angler draws the fish with the help of bait, a worm placed on a hook. Jesus' agony works, according to Macarius, likewise. He goes on then to cite Ps 21:7LXX: "But I am a worm, and not human (Ἐγὼ δέ εἰμι σκώληξ καὶ οὐκ ἄνθρωπος)" which triggers a subtle theology. The mentioning of the worm is, of course, a hidden reference to Christ's strategy in Gethsemane, his weakness as the bait of the angler. However, this biblical text simultaneously says that Christ is not a human being, thus implying that the bait-theology only partially portrays Jesus; it is implied that his divinity is left out. It is the *human* Christ who appears in the garden.[127] Once the worm of God is united with the Word of God, then the devil is fought: "through the mystic hook he drew up the primeval dragon, concerning whom one of the chosen holy ones prophesied: 'You shall draw a dragon with a hook' " (3.17); the scriptural quotation is from Job 40:25a. The Gethsemane scene is placed within the theological metaphor of ensnaring the devil before finally bringing him down. The worm and the hook are explained entirely naturally, according to fishing practices. The worm surrounds the hook, and thus becomes the means whereby the devil is taken.[128] The worm is Jesus' human nature fastened to the hook, which is his divine nature. Allegorical creativity is certainly at play. Without addressing it explicitly, Macarius is dealing with the problem of Origen, that only the human aspect of Jesus is involved with the cup prayer.

### 4.8.7 *A Mysterious Plan*

The response to the accusation regarding the Gethsemane cup dictum is brought to a close in 3.9.18 (73). Macarius now hopes to have refuted the problem of Gethsemane sufficiently. He abbreviates what he has worked out in detail, saying pointedly that Jesus in Gethsemane prayed to be released from his passion "for reasons of the universal plan of salvation (τοῦ τῆς κοινῆς

127 See above on Origen, who also distributed the different parts of the prayer on Jesus' humanity and divinity respectively; see Chapter 4.1.4.

128 For the background of this metaphor in early Christian writings, see *Apocriticus* (tr. Crafer), xix and *Macarios de Magnésie Tome 1* (ed. and tr. Goulet), 206–12.

οἰκονομίας χάριν)."[129] The key term (οἰκονομία) here encapsulates the main point already introduced in 3.9.2 (69) about the principles of interpreting the agony in Gethsemane rightly. It said there that it was a matter of finding the hidden meaning that accords with οἰκονομία or being able to reveal this plan (cf. 3.9.3 (70)). This term refers to a mysterious plan of salvation witnessed to in the Scriptures (*Apocriticus* 2.22.3 (17); 2.29.2 (32) and 3.8.2 (64)). The hermeneutics unraveled here demonstrates that, according to Macarius, only an interpretation based on Christian theology of salvation as a whole is able to come to terms with what appears to be a petitionary prayer to escape an individual death in Gethsemane. This scene from the life of Jesus paved the way for reflecting upon both Christology and Soteriology.

Such sophisticated and subtle interpretations are an indication of how difficult the agonized Jesus in Gethsemane appeared to many Christians. The Jesus "who taught his disciples not to despise death, and who fortified them with weapons of endurance and, patience, he was himself very fearful (ἀποδειλιᾷ)[130] and shuddered (φρίττει) and trembled (τρέμει) for death" (3.9.3 (69–70)) made a troubling impression on believers as well. However, what we observe in this theologically informed exegesis of the prayer also owes much to contemporary Homeric scholarship. Maren R. Niehoff in *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (2011) has demonstrated how Jewish exegesis in Alexandria addresses scriptural questions with methods recognizable in Homeric scholarship, and Macarius appears to stand on the same shoulders in the way that he comes to terms with Gethsemane. Alexandrian Jews addressed the verisimilitude of scriptural texts, contradicting statements found in Scripture and underlying structures that might provide solutions to these problems. Niehoff points out how Philo's conviction that the Torah is firmly consistent paves the way for addressing contradictions and various problems.[131]

Macarius' *Apocriticus* bears many resemblances to the zetetic literature that addresses such challenges hermeneutically (see above). Macarius has adopted this literary genre to discuss New Testament passages as Scripture, among which is the agony in Gethsemane. The troubling prayer of Jesus is rightly understood when subordinated to the triumph (κατόρθωμα)[132] of God's οἰκονομία (*Apocriticus* 3.9.3 (70)). In Philo's words, the full truth of any crux in

129 My translation.

130 This term is closely associated with cowardice; see LSJ s.v.

131 Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship*, 139–51.

132 This noun refers to success, to what is done rightly, to a virtuous action; see LSJ s.v.

the Torah is known to God alone (*Opif.* 72). Naturally, that prepares the ground for sophisticated exegesis on the basis of superior principles or perspectives.

This is also the overarching principle of the salvation plan that enables Macarius to put things right vis-a-vis Gethsemane. In so doing he also brings to mind ancient Homeric exegesis, as formulated for instance in the maxim of "elucidating Homer from Homer."[133] As a consequence, this implies searching for an adequate perspective within which details and apparent contradictions can be understood correctly. Porphyry, the most likely shadow figure of *Apocriticus*, composed the most complete commentary on Homer, the so-called *Homeric Questions* and proceeded according to this maxim. Plutarch's *How to Study Poetry* (*Mor.* 14e–37b) provides examples of the strategy in practice. *Apocriticus*' affinity with the zetetic genre and Homeric scholarship is suggestive of a pedagogical setting for this discourse on Gethsemane. Certainly, it has apologetic features, but it appears to serve a didactic purpose vis-a-vis believers. This treatise thus served to edify and instruct believers on how to reason in a Christian way about Gethsemane. This was obviously important as so many other plausible interpretations were suggested to them, many of them criticisms that they had to confront or digest.

## 4.9 Gethsemane and Foes: A Transition to the New Testament

It is time to turn directly to the biblical versions that in fact triggered the polemics presented in this chapter. The criticism levelled against Jesus' performance in the garden was that he failed to meet the standards of dying nobly and courageously. He thus showed himself to be neither a divine nor a learned man. He faced death like a woman, unable to bring the passions under control.

Without question, this comes as no surprise since the issue of passion and freedom therefrom (ἀπάθεια) was a favorite topic in the Stoic philosophy that formed a broad basis for popular values found in antiquity.[134] Stoic thinking has as a core position that the wise and rational man is marked by ἀπάθεια (SVF I. 99.22–23; Diogenes Laertius (Zeno), 7.117), the very opposite of excess in emotions. Stoics favored equanimity, a state of mind undisturbed by passions or circumstances. Entries for ἀνδρεία and δειλία found in Stobaeus (Stob. *Ecl.* III. 7–8; pp. 308–46) attest to the widespread connection between the wise man and equanimity.

133 See Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 49–58, for further references to relevant literature.

134 See SVF I. 205–15 (pp. 50–52; III. 377–490 (pp. 92–113)).

The four classical passions were ἐπιθυμία, φόβος, λύπη, and ἡδονή.[135] According to SVF III. 416 (p. 101.21–23), there are different kinds of λύπη, but all kinds are naturally evil. According to Didymus, *Epitome of Stoic Ethics*, λύπη is defined as "pain as a premature death."[136] Interestingly, distress (λύπη) is closely associated with selfishness; hence it is often caused by envy, since a person in distress believes that benefits are reserved only for others.[137] This perspective plays a significant role in coming to terms with Jesus' performance in Gethsemane.

The polemic investigated demonstrates that what was held against Jesus in Gethsemane was essentially equivalent to the ideals that held pride of place in Clement's presentation of martyrdom (Chapter 1 of this study). The pagan polemic that we have traced is found in sources later than the New Testament passages in question. Nonetheless, this polemic existed in a cultural atmosphere as regards death, courage, and masculinity attested to in other, much older, sources that did not target Christian faith and its sources. The polemic likely puts into words what was already current at the time of the New Testament and brings it to bear on Gethsemane. It is therefore valuable to have the pagan polemic as a kind of foil against which to read the New Testament passages on Gethsemane, particularly when we conceive of them as participating in a discourse.

This critique was handed down to posterity through Christian respondents. Thus, through the criticisms we have also come into contact with various attempts at making sense of this scene in Jesus' life. While the critique emphasized the first part of the prayer (the cup), the respondents made the second part on submissiveness and obedience their point of departure. It has by now become clear that the garden scene was targeted in discourse not only by critics but also by Christians themselves. The biblical passages breathe the same air that brought the critique and responses into being.

Some preliminary observations from these passages corroborate that, in spite of differences in terms both of chronology and geography, these passages are part of an ongoing discourse. In the first place, the way John's Gospel differs radically from the Synoptic Gospels (see below) precisely on the first prayer is likely indicative of some uneasiness with tradition. Second, this assertion finds supportive evidence from two observations about Luke's version. The

135 SVF III. 378 (p. 92.15–21); Diogenes Laertius (Zeno), 7:110; Stobaeus *Ecl.* II.7.10 (pp. 88–92); II.8.21 (p. 142). See also Arius Didymus, *Epitome of Stoic Ethics* (ed. Arthur Pomeroy. SBLTT Graeco-Roman Series 44/14; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 10–21.

136 Didymus, *Epitome*, 63. Didymus lived in the Augustan period.

137 Didymus, *Epitome*, 60–63.

way λύπη is removed from Jesus, and attributed to the disciples alone, must be given attention in light of the role we have seen that λύπη has both in ancient moral philosophy and more specifically in the Gethsemane discourse. The implication is that the narrative accounts in the gospels do not only form the point from which the discourses proceeded; they are themselves embedded in that discourse.

## 4.10 New Testament Voices: From Story to Example

As we turn now to the New Testament evidence, the Gospels will, of course, hold pride of place. It is natural to compare the narrative accounts found in them. The aim in doing so is however, not to reach any conclusion with regard to sources, chronology, or dependence. I take Mark's Gospel as my point of departure, which necessarily evokes the two-source theory, though I consider it unlikely that Mark in all aspects can claim priority. On the contrary, it is likely that traditions merge in all versions, so that old traces at least in principle may be found equally in all the synoptic versions. Furthermore, I do not claim that variations are by definition alterations of other versions. The versions may well represent more or less independent accounts of a scene that circulated more widely. Based on that assumption, my purpose is to work out distinct perspectives on each of the versions. These become apparent through comparisons and by examining them through the material presented thus far in the present study. When synoptic comparisons are carried out, they do not aim at establishing a certain relationship between the texts, but serve primarily to work out the idiosyncrasies of the different accounts of this incident and to introduce the current discourse on the matter. I focus on the emotions, passions, and the prayer addressed in these texts.

CHAPTER 5

# Mark 14:32–42: Jesus—Righteous Sufferer and Example

The first version of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane to examine is Mark's presentation. Mark's version participates in the discourse on how to come to terms with this tradition. First, the Gethsemane scene is rather odd when compared to this Gospel more generally (see below); furthermore, it is an embarrassing text when seen against the background of ideals on masculinity and courage in the contemporary world that the preceding chapters have worked out in detail. Jesus is portrayed in a way that puts him to the test against ideals current in antiquity. Both observations serve to affirm the existence of at least a well-established tradition behind Mark, if not unqualified authenticity.[1] The core of the story about Jesus at prayer in agony, hoping for his release from the imminent death, has been *given* to Mark. The reasons favoring the view that this incident was passed on to Mark are precisely the questions that triggered the need to come to terms with tradition.

## 5.1 Structure

Jesus arrives at the garden called Gethsemane (v. 32). A threefold structure is assumed (τὸ τρίτον, v. 41):

| vv. 35–38 | vv. 39–40 | vv. 41–42 |
|---|---|---|
| (Jesus) went | he went again | |
| report of prayer | | |
| the actual prayer | prayer mentioned | |
| he came | he came again | he came a third time |
| he found | he found | |
| he says | he says | he says |
| questions and imperatives | | final words |

1 For the question of authenticity, see also Feldmeier, *Krisis*, 133–39; Joel Marcus, *Mark 8–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Yale Bible 27A; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 975–77.

 | DOI 10.1163/9789004309647_006

Mark renders the wording of Jesus's prayer only once, so the first part of the structure is also the most complete. The other two instances are more or less repetitive but the threefold structure is still important. The repeated prayer indicates intensity,[2] and the threefold prayer conveys that Jesus submitted to his Father's will only after praying deeply for a way out. The structure thus portrays a Jesus at struggle or conflict, with a will that differs from his Father's.

Narrative and dicta are interspersed throughout the passage. The narrative gives a coherent story of Jesus in Gethsemane and how his disciples Peter, James, and John fell asleep:

32a They went to a place called Gethsemane.
33 He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated.
35 And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.
37a He came and found them sleeping.
39 And again he went and prayed saying the same words.
40 And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him.
41a He came a third time.

Interspersed in this narrative are dicta:

32b and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."
34 And he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake."
36 He said, "Abba Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want."
37b and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour?
38 Keep awake and pray that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak."
41b and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? He is absent.[3] The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
42 Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

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2 Thus also Cha, "Confronting Death," 218.

3 I differ here from the NRSV; see below.

The narrative creates the drama of the incident, while the dicta slow the pace and add focus and interpretation.[4] The dicta are decisive for making sense of the incident. They are either taken from Scripture or spoken by Jesus himself. No other figure says anything in this passage. Mary Ann Tolbert notes that the Gethsemane scene is "a superb example" of an interior dialogue or a narrative soliloquy.[5] She points out that when the protagonist finds himself in critical moments, convention in ancient storytelling dramatized the internal struggle with such passages. These observations render the prayer found in verse 36 proper especially important.

As pointed out by Werner H. Kelber, the story has two foci, one on Jesus' "plea for release from the passion"[6] and the other on the lack of understanding by the disciples. They remain silent and are only addressees of what Jesus says. The critical question addressed to Peter in verse 37 paves the way for imperatives to all the disciples in verse 38. The emphasis shifts from Jesus' destiny to his instruction of the disciples. This leaves a tension in the text between a focus on what will come to pass for Jesus and his role as paradigm on how disciples are to cope with temptations. The injunctions given to the disciples are aimed at preventing precisely what the story tells us about the disciples, that they fell asleep.

This directs us to an implied relationship between the narrative and the dicta: the narrative serves as an illustration of the imperatives of staying awake in times of temptation. The narrative illustrates the injunctions in a contrasting way. While Jesus is at prayer, the disciples fall asleep. Their bodily positions go from "sitting" to "sleeping;" "lying down" is probably implied. The fact that both verbs beginning with καθ- further strengthens the stylistic connection. From verse 37 it is obvious that the bodily position of "sitting" equals "staying awake," as already in verse 34 "remain here, and keep awake" is equivalent to "sit here" in verse 32. This paves the way for verse 38, where a figurative dimension of the story comes into view.[7] What started out as a story preparing *Jesus* for his destiny gradually becomes a text where Jesus at prayer is paradigmatic for the

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4 Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 165–66 argues that a similar relationship between what is told or described and a discursive level is found elsewhere in Mark's Gospel, and that this is not an indication of seams resulting from a redacted text.

5 Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 214–16.

6 Werner H. Kelber, "The Hour of the Son of Man and the Temptation of the Disciples (Mark 14:32–42)," in *The Passion in Mark: Studies on Mark 14–16* (ed. Werner H. Kelber; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 46, 53.

7 This can also be argued with reference to Mark 13:32–37 where sleeping and staying awake has a similar meaning; see Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 976.

*disciples*.[8] Thus, in addition to preparing Jesus for his passion, the passage has a didactic purpose vis-a-vis readers that emerges.

## 5.2 Narrative Gethsemane

### 5.2.1 *Solitary and Profoundly Troubled*

Jesus is pictured as becoming gradually more alone in Gethsemane. He separates three of the disciples from the group, leaves them behind, and finds himself abandoned as they fall asleep. Eventually, he is also left alone by God. His prayer is solitary. In verse 33b, the emotional state of Jesus is portrayed in the terms ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν (Mark 9:15; 14:33; 16:5–6). In the sense of distress, the first term is extremely rare in Greek, but together these terms portray Jesus as profoundly troubled, shuddering in horror, physically affected.[9] The first verb often denotes excitement,[10] but together with ἀδημονεῖν, it clearly means to be in anguish, as demonstrated in Matthew's parallel (26:37), where ἀδημονεῖν is more or less synonymous with λυπεῖσθαι.[11] This finds corroboration in the scriptural citation in Mark 14:34 (περιλυπός). Mark 3:5 offers a cognate (συλλυπούμενος) that describes Jesus' becoming angry (μετ᾽ ὀργῆς) against the Pharisees. Emotions run high, which is also proven by the verse following immediately upon this: "The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him." A heightened emotional atmosphere on the part of Jesus is also assumed in Gethsemane.

As for the meaning of the rare ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι, Sir 30:9 is worth mentioning. Here it appears in a synonymous parallelism with λυπεῖσθαι, suggesting that the two are functionally equivalent or at least closely related: "Coodle a child, and it will terrorize you (ἐκθαμβήσει σε); play with him and he will grieve you

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8 Based on observations like this, many scholars have argued that the Gethsemane episode is composed of different sources, due to the fact that only a minimal core tradition can be assumed; see for example Karl Georg Kuhn, "Jesus in Gethsemane," *EvT* 12 (1952–53): 260–85. For a detailed discussion and refutation of similar views, see Feldmeier, *Krisis*, 70–112; Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 219–23. The tension I have pointed out here is not necessarily suggestive of different sources, but reflects the dual nature of how Jesus traditions were handed down; see below in the present chapter.

9 ἀδημονεῖν is especially instructive in this regard; see for example Plato, *Phaedr*. 251d–e; Philo *Praem*. 151; *Flacc*. 166–67; *Det*. 98–99.

10 Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (WBC 34B. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 409.

11 For other synonymous terms, see Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary* (Hermeneia: A Critical & Historical Commentary on the Bible. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 395 note 22.

(λυπήσει σε)" (*NETS*). It is here worth noticing that the context is about bringing up children and youth; it is about *paideia*. This becomes evident in the illustration chosen (v. 8), the taming of wild horses, a stereotype for the need of educating unruly children.[12] In other words, the reaction implied in ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι and λυπεῖσθαι is one of unbridled passions. This is not unsurprising due to the role assigned to rationality in mastering the passions (chaps. 2 and 3).

According to James Barr's warning against the error of "the fallacy of totality transfer," we cannot assume that everything worked out in a lexical investigation is necessarily totally relevant for each appearance of the term.[13] Georg Bertram's entry on θάμβος and cognates in Kittel and Friedrich's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*[14] illustrates Barr's point nicely. Bertram observes that the verbs in this entry are often found in contexts of revelation or epiphany.[15] Luke 5:8–10 about Peter's fish catch serves Bertram's point well. The problem arises when Bertram makes this term "a typical element in a revelation or epiphany."[16] Without further discussion, Bertram transfers this meaning to the Gethsemane scene. Describing Jesus in such terms is not merely a description of his spiritual condition, "but also a characterization of Gethsemane as an epiphany. . . . The fearful Christ is the Bearer of divine revelation for us."[17]

This is what Barr's warning rightly targets. Furthermore, Bertram fails to note that a reversal of roles has taken place. In all the texts he mentions as revelatory, the fear is on the part of the *disciples* as they are gradually grasping the implications of who Jesus is. In Gethsemane, it is *Jesus* himself who is distressed. Bertram is silent on this fundamental difference. In a wider theological perspective it is certainly possible to claim that Gethsemane has a revelatory character, but that cannot be deduced from the terminology alone. Distress with bodily consequences is what is at stake here.

### 5.2.2 *Propatheia?*

Some Christians took advantage of Mark, and Matthew, who both say that Jesus "began" (ἤρξατο) to be distressed. They made this a point of departure for a philosophically inspired interpretation in accordance with how ancient ideals of self-mastery were viewed.[18] The use of ἤρξατο provided them with an

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12 Sandnes, *Belly and Body*, 112, 220–21, 239, 255.

13 Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*.

14 G. Bertram, "θάμβος," *TDNT* 3, 4–7.

15 See for example Mark 1:27; 9:15, 10:24; Luke 4:36.

16 Bertram "θάμβος," 6.

17 Bertram "θάμβος," 7.

18 See Chapter 2.5.3 and 18 in the present study.

opportunity to explain the emotional and physical anguish of Jesus as fully consistent with important moral distinctions made in Stoic philosophy. They took it to indicate the Stoic notion of *propatheia*, the initial stage of emotions before they erupt into real passions and desires; only in this later stage were they to be blamed.

In the text under study, ἤρξατο does not at all indicate an initial and innocent stage towards a later manifestation of emotions. Verse 34 undoubtedly represents a continuation of verse 33 and no such idea is found there. Furthermore, the verb ἄρχεσθαι refers elsewhere either to the initiation of an action (as in Mark 14:19) or to an action's being continued (as in Mark 15:8).[19] There are numerous examples of ἄρχεσθαι followed by the infinitive in the narrative style of the Gospels, but almost without exception it refers to the beginning of an action that continues for some time. According to Mark 2:23 and Matt 12:1, the disciples "began to pluck heads of grain," which implies an action of some *duration*. Hence, Luke in his version 6:1 uses the durative imperfect. In Mark 4:1 (cf. 12:1), the sermon on parables is introduced by the narrative formulation ἤρξατο διδάσκειν ("he began to teach"). An action of some duration is again introduced.[20]

In some passages this narrative style serves to *intensify* what goes on. The people of the Gerasenes, after their loss of swine into the sea, are described as ἤρξαντο παρακαλεῖν, which is indicative of intense begging that Jesus leave their region. Similarly, the blind Bartimeus "began to shout" (Mark 10:47). The reaction of the bystanders is indicative of what kind of action is envisaged: "Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly" (Mark 10:48). A repeated action with intensity is implied in these examples. Contrary to the attempts by Jerome and others attempt to minimize Jesus' reaction by referring to "began," we should rather emphasize that this narrative style serves to enhance the reaction in terms of both duration and intensity. The philosophically inspired interpretation of "began" in Mark 14:33 and Matt 26:37 is revealing in terms of how many Christians were struggling to cope with this passage. Their view speaks against the narrative style of these passages and brings into the entire narrative an elusiveness alien to the passage as a whole, at least as it appears in both Mark and Matthew.

### 5.2.3 *Jesus at Prayer* (*Reported*)

As Jesus moves away from his friends into solitude, he falls to the ground (ἔπιπτεν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς). That position introduces his prayer. Scholars interpret

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19 BGAD s.v.

20 Thus also in Matt 4:17, where Jesus' public ministry is introduced in the same way.

this as a sign of either piety and submission[21] or distress;[22] the two, however, are not necessarily in conflict. In his deep distress Jesus submits himself to his Father's will (see below). His bodily position embodies exactly this duality. Since Jesus elsewhere in Mark's Gospel stands and looks upwards while praying (Mark 6:41; 7:34, cf. 11:25), it is likely that Mark now passes on something more than his usual practice of piety. Some kind of stumbling caused by fear follows from how Jesus' agony is described in the preceding verses. Jung-Sik Cha refers to Mark 9:20, where a possessed demon "falls to the ground," convulsing in pain and distress.[23] The similar phrase "falling on the knees" (θεὶς τὰ γόνατα) is used in Acts 7:60 and 9:40. The first of these instances conveys the same ambiguity that we see in Jesus' falling to the ground in Gethsemane. While being stoned to death, Stephen directs himself to the Lord; bodily consequences wrought by fear are combined with piety (see below). Piety and turmoil are not contrasting ideals here as they are in the Socratic legacy, where a prominent element of piety and wisdom was silence, or silent bravery.

The fact that piety and homage are involved here, does not make it less emotional. Jesus falling to the ground has interesting parallels in Chariton's *Callirhoe*.[24] According to *Chaer*. 5.2.4, Chaereas was forced to hide and stay away from from his beloved Callirhoe for some time. Tears ran down his cheeks; he threw himself on the floor and teared apart his clothes while pouring dust upon his face. Even more striking is *Chaer*. 3.6.6. Chaereas' ship arrived the estate of Dionysios, and he found there his wife married to Dionysios. His reaction is worth citing:

> Chareas said nothing in front of the attendant, and at first kept a strict silent (ἐσιγησεν ἐγκρατῶς), except that the tears spontaneously flowed

21 Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 977.

22 Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia: A Critical & Historical Commentary on the Bible. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 677.

23 Cha, "Confronting Death," 91. Reidar Hvalvik, "Praying with Outstretched Hands: Nonverbal Aspects of Early Christian Prayer and the Question of Identity," in *Early Christian Prayer and Identity Formation* (ed. Reidar Hvalvik and Karl Olav Sandnes; WUNT 336; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 77–82 examines this bodily position in detail. His presentation does not, however, take into account the situation of distress that is so clear in Gethsemane. This makes the bodily posture in this case more than the ordinary kneeling while at prayer.

24 I owe this information to the anonymous reader of my manuscript, who referred to *Acts of the Pagan Martyrs: Acta Alexandrinorum* (ed. Herbert A. Musurillo; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 254, who also makes reference to some passages in the Ephesian story of Xenophon.

> from him. But withdrawing to a distance (πόρρω) all alone, he threw himself on the ground (ἐπι γῆς…ἔρριψεν ἑαυτὸν) and exclaimed, 'Kindly, sea–why have you preserved me? Was it so that after a safe voyage I should see Callirhoe the wife of another? (Goold, LCL)

This passage has much in common with Jesus at Gethsemane. He also keeps silent when among the disciples. As he withdraws from them, his emotions overwhelm him, and he engages in earnest prayer. Seen against this backdrop, Jesus appears as highly emotional here.

Jesus' prayer is mentioned three times; it is reported in indirect speech (3. person, v. 35b), cited in verse 36 in the first person, and narrated in verse 39 that Jesus prayed "saying the same words." This implies that verse 35b and the prayer proper (v. 36) are considered identical, which in fact they are not. Nonetheless, this threefold citation adds significance to the prayer itself and leaves verse 36 as the climax.

The indirect prayer (εἰ δυνατόν ἐστιν) implies a recognition that God's will or plan may be an obstacle to the escape for which Jesus prays. The fact that Jesus asks for "the hour" to pass from him implies a reference to a divine plan and apocalyptic overtones resonate.[25] The submissiveness that will later be stated openly is here anticipated tacitly. It is also implied that what is at stake is not merely the dread of death or a fearful Jesus, as a common human reaction. Jesus prays to be excused from the divine plan to which "the hour" refers. This makes the prayer more dramatic, bearing consequences far beyond the incident itself.

Jesus returned from his solitary prayer. Although he urged the disciples to remain seated (v. 32), he found them asleep. The disciples' resting (ἀναπαύεσθε) forms a stark contrast to the struggle in which Jesus found himself. Their bodies visualize failure and thus strengthen the solitude of Jesus. On the narrative level, the acts of sleeping and resting are clearly physically comprehensible; however, the story adds a metaphorical level to this quotidian image (see below).

### 5.2.4 *An Odd Story within the Gospel*

Nothing in the Gospel prepares the audience for the Gethsemane scene. According to Colleen M. Conway, "Jesus teaches that he must suffer and die,

25 Thus also Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 411 and Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 977, who speaks of "a term predestined for the eschatological crisis," which forms a linkage with Mark 13 (see Chapter 5.6 below).

but the scene in the garden makes clear that he really would rather not."[26] Furthermore, Mark's interpretation of Jesus' passion as such "is nothing but a fulfilment of what is written in the Scriptures."[27] Both observations affirm that Gethsemane disturbs the picture conveyed by the rest of the narrative. Jesus hopes to escape precisely the destiny assigned to him by Scripture or by God.

The portrait given elsewhere is that Jesus faces death resolutely without any indication of fear. He predicts his own death several times (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32–34), even doing so "boldly" (παρρησίᾳ τὸν λόγον, 8:32). Mark is alone in pointing this out so specifically, but this remark is equally significant for the Gethsemane prayer. Παρρησία refers to frank, direct, or open speech and indicates words that are uttered without any concealment or reservation. Hence, it often appears as contrasted with fakery and flattery, as seen for example in Plutarch's treatise on *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend* (*Mor*. 50f; 53d–e; 59a–60d). The idea of speaking frankly is intimately connected with the *ethos* of the speaker, since words have to be accompanied by corresponding acts. Words and acts that militate against each other reveal a flatterer:[28] "But the speech of a man light-minded and mean in character (ἐλαφροῦ δὲ καὶ φαύλου τὸ ἦθος ἀνθρώπου), when it undertakes to deal in frankness, results only in evoking the retort: 'Wouldst thou heal others, full of sores thyself!' " (*Mor*. 71f). *Ethos* or character and frank speech cannot be separated; as Plutarch puts it, "every man's frank speech (παρρησία) needs to be backed by character (ἤθους)" (*Mor*. 71e). The editorial comment in Mark 8:32 has to be understood along these lines, rendering a picture of Jesus as committed to what he says, but this also enhances the issue of his *ethos* in the light of what happens in Gethsemane and brings to mind the role of consistency in the legacy of facing death courageously.[29]

Jesus rebuked Peter when Peter was opposed to his own destiny: "Get behind me, Satan. For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things" (Mark 8:33). Peter's protest does in fact find an echo in Jesus' own prayer at Gethsemane. What Jesus in Mark 8 attributes to Satan finds a parallel in his own prayer as he faces his agony in Gethsemane. Jesus utters

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26 Colleen M. Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 100.

27 Cha, "Confronting Death," 2; cf. for example Mark 14:49.

28 Peter Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul's Relations with the Corinthians* (WUNT 2.23; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 78–90 makes inconsistency a characteristic of the flatterer. Inconsistency is at the end of the day a matter of trustworthiness.

29 See Chapter 2.1.2 and 3.1 in the present study.

a prayer the content of which echoes his words on the temptation of Satan.[30] Now, however, he utters the prayer about himself.

Amphilocius, the Bishop of Iconium in the late 4th century formulates this tension sharply in his *Oratio* 6.3.69–76 (*Pater si possibile est*), which addresses the cup prayer specifically:[31]

> He said that the Son of Man had to be handed over to be crucified and to be buried and raised the third day; but what does he pray when he comes to the death of the cross? If it was necessary for the Son of Man to be arrested, why do you then say: 'If possible, let the cup pass from me?' If you did not want at all to suffer, why did you then take on a body of suffering? If you carried a body liable to suffering, why did you become distressed (λυπῇ) and annoyed (δυσχεραίνεις) when you came to the suffering?

In the immediate context, Amphilocius also brings into play a comparison with Jesus' own words to Peter in Mark 8:33. The point Amphilocius here makes poignantly is nothing less than what appears from a narrative reading of Mark's Gospel.[32] Such troubling questions certainly do come into play when the garden prayer is situated within the larger narrative.

Jesus' facing death fearlessly is also emphasized in his dictum to the disciples about taking up their cross (Mark 8:34–37). Discipleship implies self-denial, as Jesus regularly manifests in the bulk of Mark's Gospel. The idea of Jesus' confronting death boldly finds its culmination in Mark 10:45: "For the Son of Man came (ἦλθεν) not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." "Came" implies purpose, plan, and Scripture.[33] This is echoed in the words on the cup in Mark 14:24: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is

30 The temptation in Mark 1:12–13 is very general, but Matt 4:6–7 brings this aspect out more clearly.

31 For the Greek text, see *Amphilochii Iconienses Opera* (ed. Cornelis Datema. CCSG 3; Brepols: Turnhout, 1978), using my own translation.

32 According to Feldmeier, *Krisis*, 144, the prayer of Jesus stands "in geradezu anstössigem Gegensatz zur bisherigen Leidensbereitschaft, wie sie in den Leidensweissagungen zum Ausdruck kommt—man denke nur an die Auseinandersetzung mit Petrus (8,31–33)."

33 Eduardo Arens, *The Elthon Sayings in the Synoptic Tradition: A Historico-Critical Investigation* (OBO 10; Freiburg: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976). Simon J. Gathercole, *The Pre-Existent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark and Luke* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), discusses in detail the Christological implications of the phrase "I have come"; it suffices here to point out that Jesus came with a purpose to complete a divinely assigned task.

poured out for you." Jesus' ministry is summarized in terms of a divine plan aimed at bringing salvation. This picture of Jesus brings to mind the Suffering Servant of Isa 53.[34] A. Feuillet says that Isaiah 53 is the "clé indispensable pour une intelligence approfondie de la scène de l'agonie."[35] Thus saying, Feuillet articulates an issue that we often come across in this investigation, namely the need to situate the Gethsemane incident within larger perspectives.

Jesus' silence in front of the assembly in Jerusalem (Mark 14:61) recalls Isa 53:7–8 where "he does not open his mouth" (*NETS*, οὐκ ἀνοίγει τὸ στόμα) occurs twice.[36] It also brings to mind Ps 37:14–16 (LXX) where the suffering David says: "like a mute not opening his mouth" (ὡσεὶ ἄλαλος οὐκ ἀνοίγων τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ, *NETS*). Being silent is interpreted in this psalm as a sign of trusting in God's vindication: "Because in you, O Lord, I hoped; it is you, O Lord, my God who will listen" (ἐπὶ σοί, κύριε, ἤλπισα. σὺ εἰσακούσῃ, κύριε ὁ θεός μου, *NETS*, cf. v. 10). Thus the silence is in itself a sign of trust or commitment.[37] At Gethsemane, there is no such silence; on the contrary, we find a prayer in which Jesus expresses his hope and wish that he might escape the very moment for which he had come.

The tension worked out here with regard to Jesus has, however, another side to it. If the Gospel is seen not only as a story about Jesus as an individual—whether divine, human, or both—but also as memories shaped and selected to be helpful for the disciples, the picture is altered in an important way. The garden scene shows a remarkable consistency with the eschatological sermon in Mark 13 (see below in this chapter) and the incident itself is shaped for the use of *instructing* disciples. Hence, the question of this particular passage within Mark's Gospel has several levels of complexities.

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34 See Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 186–98; Collins, *Mark*, 500; James R. Edwards, "The Servant of the Lord and the Gospel of Mark," in *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels* (ed. Thomas R. Hatina. Vol. 1; LNTS 304; London: T&T Clark, 2006). Some scholars question whether Mark 10:45 really echoes Isa 53, often referring to Charles K. Barrett, "The Background of Mark 10:45," in *New Testament Essays in Memory of T.W. Manson* (ed. A.J.B. Higgins; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), 1–18. Barrett does not include conceptual ideas, but limits himself to terminological similarities. The scriptural context assumed in these texts, which define Jesus' death in altruistic terms, suggests that Isa 53 is indeed implied. In any case, Mark 10:45 is beyond doubt about an *altruistic* death.

35 A. Feuillet, *L'Agonie de Gethsémani: Enquête exégetique et theologique suivie d'une étude du "Mystère de Jésus" de Paschal* (Paris: Gabalda, 1977), 29.

36 See Douglas J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1983), 148–51.

37 Cf. Chapter 4.2 of the present study.

The immediate context of the garden scene urgently demands an explanation. In the table scene preceding Gethsemane, Jesus is in control, predicting what will happen to him, what the fates of his disciples will be, and what God's will is: "And Jesus said to them, 'You will all become deserters: for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee'."[38] The sudden shift in the garden makes it a kind of an anti-text in urgent need of clarification. This is offered by the dicta and by paying attention to how the anomaly works in the larger narrative. We turn now to the dicta of this incident and focus more explicitly on interpretation.

## 5.3 Making Sense of the Anomaly

The dicta are helpful for grasping how this scene is interpreted; they add focus and perspective. The fact that scriptural citations or allusions are involved makes it natural to seek the level of interpretation in the spoken words. The scene becomes profoundly biblical. Furthermore, the Lord's Prayer is echoed (see below). These observations provide parameters for interpreting the incident. The puzzling events in the garden, where Jesus acted so poorly and apparently against the ideals held by pagans, by Jewish martyr theology, and even by later Christian martyr texts, are now placed in a context that can make sense of his prayer and his grief.

### 5.3.1 *Scripture*

On the basis of καθίσατε ὧδε, J.A. Grassi has argued that Mark 14:32b (cf. Matt 26:36) echoes Gen 22:5 and brings to mind Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac.[39] In the tradition, Genesis 22 was a story about Abraham's faith and obedience under examination. Clearly, the instruction given to the disciples is similar to that given to Abraham's servants ("stay here"). In both cases it also serves to introduce the worship or prayer to take place and to announce the return of the key figures of Jesus and Abraham, respectively. Both passages are about testing (Gen 22:1 ἐπείραζεν); according to the tradition, Genesis 22 was recounted as a trial that proved Abraham faithful and obedient (1 Macc 2:52; Sir 44:20; Heb 11:17; *Jub.* 17:16; 18:9). Just as the citation from Psalms about the righteous sufferer are important in this text (see below), it is likewise possible to imagine

38 This is also pointed out by Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 153.

39 J.A. Grassi, "'Abba Father' (Mark 14:36): Another Approach," *JAAR* 50 (1982): 449–58; see also Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 395 who makes reference to the Abrahamic tradition in Matt 26:36.

that some phrases evoke this early, crucial text about faith, obedience, and sacrifice in the tradition, although the contextual links to Genesis 22 are certainly more dubious. Although Grassi probably overstates his case, he has rightly observed that Scripture is essential here. It is a matter of finding a perspective that can make sense of this odd story, especially as it emerges in the dicta.

Jesus addresses the disciples about his own situation in verse 34, using biblical language drawn from a number of texts:

> Ps 6:3–5 ἐλέησόν με, κύριε, ὅτι ἀσθενής εἰμι. ἴασαί με, κύριε, ὅτι ἐταράχθη τὰ ὀστᾶ μου, καὶ ἡ ψυχή μου ἐταράχθη σφόδρα. καὶ σύ, κύριε, ἕως πότε; ἐπίστρεψον, κύριε, ῥῦσαι τὴν ψυχήν μου, σῶσόν με ἕνεκεν ἐλέους σου.
>
> Have mercy on me, O Lord, because I am weak; heal me, O Lord, because my bones were troubled. And my soul also was troubled very much, and you, O Lord—how long? Turn, O Lord, rescue my soul; save me for the sake of your mercy. (*NETS*)
>
> Ps 41:6 (= 41:12= 42:5) ἵνα τί περίλυπος εἶ, ψυχή, καὶ ἵνα τί συνταράσσεις με; ἔλπισον ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, ὅτι ἐξομολογήσομαι αὐτῷ. Σωτήριον τοῦ προσώπου μου ὁθεός μου.
>
> "Why are you deeply grieved, O my soul, and why are you throwing me into confusion? Hope in God, because I shall acknowledge him; my God is deliverance of my face." (*NETS*)
>
> Jonah 4:9 Εἰ σφόδρα λελύπησαι σὺ ἐπὶ τῇ κολοκύνθῃ; καὶ εἶπεν Σφόδρα λελύπημαι ἐγὼ ἕως θανάτου.
>
> And God said to Ionas, "Are you exceedingly grieved over the gourd?" And he said: "I am exceedingly grieved, unto death." (*NETS*)
>
> Sir 37:2[40] οὐχὶ λύπη ἔνι ἕως θανάτου ἑταῖρος καὶ φίλος τρεπόμενος εἰς ἔχτραν;
>
> Will not grief approach unto death, when companion and friend turns into an enemy? (*NETS*)

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40 This text is especially stimulating because it speaks about the sorrow when a friend turns into an enemy, which signifies the role of Judas the Betrayer in this passage; see Feldmeier, *Krisis*, 154–55. For other relevant Jewish analogies, see Bruce Chilton et al., *A Comparative Handbook to the Gospel of Mark: Comparisons with Pseudepigrapha, the Qumran Scrolls, and Rabbinic Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 469–78.

Ps 41:6, 12 and 42:5 are close in wording to what Jesus actually says and are noted as citations in the Nestle-Aland 28th edition. The larger point is probably not to cite one particular text, but to provide a rich biblical backdrop that makes sense of Jesus' situation. Evoking these texts "has the effect of making Jesus the speaker of traditional lament."[41] The sentence given in Mark 14:34 is in its Old Testament context a statement of *confidence* in God, notwithstanding the fact that it is spoken out of deep distress. Hence, it is in the Septuagint rendered as the critical question τί: "why," indicating that it is precisely when trouble looms that God is to be trusted. This simultaneous distress and trust is crucial. Jesus' prayer has no such question, but is instead a statement or fact: "My soul is deeply grieved." In spite of this alteration, the biblical contexts resonating in Jesus' dictum still imply confidence, as can be seen from the way Jesus submits to the will of his Father. That being said, verse 34 indicates strongly that Jesus finds himself in deep turmoil. The adjective περίλυπός has an almost superlative meaning, "exceedingly sorrowful." This term is used in Aristotle *Eth. nic*. 1124a to speak about the virtuous man seeking moderation in all things; περίλυπός refers to an extreme situation avoided by the wise man. In Mark, this is further intensified through ἕως θανάτου; a crux for Bible translators.

### 5.3.2 *ἕως θανάτου*

This particular phrase pertains directly to the question of how Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane is considered. Unfortunately, the interpretation of this preposition followed by the genitive "death" is far from obvious. Three fundamental options merit consideration. According to the first choice, Jesus is so full of sorrow that he could die or wants to die, which intensifies his being troubled.[42] The second option is that Jesus says that he is sorrowful until he dies; i.e. until the very end.[43] Such is the case in the prologue of 4 Maccabees, where it says that Eleazar, the seven brothers, and their mother despised sufferings (ἕως θανάτου, 4 Macc 1:9). The story in which that piece of information occurs makes it abundantly clear that the prepositional phrase does not speak of the dangers of death as such. The martyrs are not afraid because of the prospect of dying; what is at stake is their endurance "until" death. In 4 Macc 14:13, the emotions in the innermost parts of the mother of the martyrs are

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41 Collins, *Mark*, 676–77.

42 Marcus, *Mark* 8–16, 975.

43 Both Jerome and Hilary discuss whether this is to be rendered *propter* or *usque ad* in Latin; both opt for the latter, as does the Vulgate (Chapter 18.1 in the present study). From the view taken by Jerome and Hilary on this passage, this makes sense. They are concerned to keep Jesus distanced from being overwhelmed with fear at the prospect of his death.

noted (πρὸς τὴν τῶν σπλάγνων συμπάθειαν) and compared to how even animals and bees protect and defend their children to the point of death (ἕως θανάτου, v. 19). Here as well, the prepositional phrase means the willingness to endure until death. Interpreting the prepositional phrase in Mark 14:34 the same way removes from the text a primary concern, which is the impending death; there is more at stake here than only holding out "until" the time of death finally arrives.

The third option for the phrase ἕως θανάτου is, therefore, that Jesus is troubled "because of" death and the pains involved. This option assumes that Jesus dreaded death.[44] In his entry on ποτήριον in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Leonhard Goppelt argues that Jesus is not afraid of death and does not shrink from the prospect of any physical suffering attendant upon death. Goppelt refers to the prayer of the psalmist not as a concern to be kept from death but as the desire to abide with God.[45] Likewise, William L. Lane writes: "It is rather the horror of one who lives wholly for the Father at the prospect of the alienation from God which is entailed."[46] Thus, Mark 14:34 is being fulfilled in the cry on the cross (Mark 15:34). Jesus' primary concern is not death, but his being alienated from God. In my opinion, neither the solitude of Jesus nor the total silence of God in this passage can justify a reading of Mark 14:36 where dread of death is absent. To be sure, the psalm tradition at play in Mark's story is about trusting in God's help, but to say that this implies no concern at all for the pains involved is an artificial reading of these Old Testament Psalms. If verse 34 is taken not solely as poetry, it is hard to escape the conclusion that Jesus is expressing genuine concern because death is impending.[47]

With reference to Hilary of Poitier's saying "But a sadness even unto death implies that death is the completion, not the cause of the sadness,"[48] Ben Witherington III argues that Jesus' reason for becoming so sad is that he knows the disciples will fail him.[49] This view does not come to terms with the fact that in the immediate context, Jesus struggles with the will or plan of the Father, asking for a possible way out. God's plan is that Jesus *must* die. Jesus' prayer can, therefore, hardly refer to anything other than his imminent death, which

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44 For the preposition, see LSJ s.v.; BDAG s.v.

45 Leonhard Goppelt, "ποτήριον," *TDNT* 6:152–53.

46 William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 516.

47 Feldmeier, *Krisis*, 148–53.

48 *De Trinitate* 10.36 (see Chapters 7.1 and 20.6.1 of the present study).

49 Thus Ben Witherington III., *Matthew* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentaries; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2006), 490–91.

leaves us with the option denied by Hilary and Ben Witherington: the cause of Jesus' distress is his anxiety over his approaching death and all that it brings upon him.

This finds substantiation in other relevant texts where ἕως θανάτου also appears. The autobiographical text of Sir 34:12(LXX) states: "Frequently I was in danger of death (ἕως θανάτου), and I was saved because of these things".[50] The phrase "being in danger of death" only makes sense here if the possibility of actually losing one's life is involved. A related autobiographical text in Sir 51:6–7 substantiates this further: "My soul drew near to death (ἤγγισεν ἕως θανάτου ἡ ψυχή μου)." The reason for this prayer is that Sirach finds himself surrounded by death, on the very brink of it (ἡ ζωή μου ἦν σύνεγγυς ᾅδου κάτω). The prepositional phrase, identical with the one in Mark 14:34, is included here in a prayer for deliverance from the danger of death. In both instances this prepositional phrase refers to what the fear in question is really about. Jesus speaks in the language of a biblical legacy in which threat, danger, and the prospect of dying are combined with piety, trust, and prayer. He is cast in a role able to make sense of both his agony and his prayer.

### 5.3.3 *A Righteous Sufferer at Prayer*

The lament gives way in verse 36 to the prayer. This is a proper prayer, featuring a second-person addressee, a petition, and a reference to previous experiences with the addressee ("for you all things are possible"). It is certainly equivalent to the reported prayer of verse 35b, but this prayer is both more intense and equally more submissive. The indirect prayer implicitly conveys submissiveness, forming a bridge to the actual prayer. However, verse 36 is an amplification in two important ways. First, what in 35b was stated as "if it is possible" has now become a fact: God is able to make a change and all is possible for him.[51] This enhances the conflict since it conveys that God has the power and means to act according to Jesus' will. The shift from the condition imposed in verse 35b ("if it is possible") to a creed-like statement in verse 36 ("everything is possible for God") is important. In the words of Sharyn Echols Dowd "[t]the power of the Gethsemane pericope depends upon the fact that even at this point in the narrative, deliverance from the cross is a real possibility."[52] Second, the reported prayer does not mention submission, although it is implied in εἰ, while

50 The idea is that the author has gained experiences through the dangers he faced, which have helped him survive in other circumstances.

51 *Pace* Holleran, *The Synoptic Gethsemane*, 26 who says that the two are parallels.

52 Sharyn Echols Dowd, *Prayer, Power, and the Problem of Suffering: Mark 11:22–25 in the Context of Markan Theology* (SBLDS 105; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 156.

in the actual prayer this is made explicit. Thus the two parts of the prayer are intertwined; they are not to be separated. Turning the two parts of the actual prayer into one single prayer with two equal and parallel parts is to betray the very heart of this text: Jesus is without doubt *struggling* to embrace the will of his Father.[53]

The first part of the prayer (v. 36a) is a petition about deliverance from the "cup" (ποτήριον). This term has a wide range of meanings; here it refers either to death or the eschatological wrath or judgment of God.[54] It is wise not to play the two off against each other. "Cup" clearly works synonymously with "hour" in verse 35. This means that the death that brings Jesus into agony takes place within the apocalyptic context of times determined by God.[55] This is substantiated when the motif of temptation is brought into the story from verse 38 on (see below). Raymond E. Brown has rightly pointed out the contrast between Jesus' prayer to have the cup removed and his challenge to James and John to drink the cup with him (Mark 10:38–39). This scandalous contrast serves to enhance and confirm "the wrenching crisis that Jesus is undergoing and adding to the picture of him as greatly distraught, sorrowful unto death, and prostrate on the earth."[56] The second part of the prayer balances this picture, as the contrasting ἀλλὰ subordinates Jesus' petition to the will of his Father.

### 5.3.4 *Simultaneity of Distress and Prayer*

It is well known that the tradition of the righteous sufferer provides a key to unlocking the Passion Narrative in Mark.[57] Joel Marcus supplies a list of the occurrences of this tradition in Mark's story.[58] From our passage, he includes

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53 For this reason, this investigation often distinguishes between the two prayers, although they together make up one prayer with two distinct elements.

54 For references, see Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 168–70 and Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 978.

55 Thus also Feldmeier, *Krisis*, 176–85. It has been suggested that Jesus' prayer to have the cup pass from him is about God's eschatological wrath which the sinner must drain rather than the immediate death, somewhat similar to the idea found in Rev 20 regarding "the second death"; this view ignores the implications of τοῦτο. *This* cup suggests that the approaching death is also the eschatological hour that bothers Jesus, *pace* Bruce McCormack," 'With Loud Cries and Tears': The Humanity of the Son in the Epistle of Hebrews," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (ed. Richard Bauckham, Daniel R. Driver, Trevor A. Hart, and Nathan MacDonald; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans 2009), 54–55, 64–65.

56 Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 170.

57 Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 172–86; Holly J. Carey, *Jesus' Cry from the Cross: Towards a First-Century Understanding of the Intertextual Relationship between Psalm 22 and the Narrative of Mark's Gospel* (LNTS 398; New York: T&T Clark, 2009).

58 Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 174–75; see also his *Mark 8–16*, 984.

not only verse 34 ("very sad") as an echo of Ps 6:3; 42:5, 11; and 42:5 but also verse 41 ("betrayed into the hands of sinners") as an echo of Ps 139:8LXX (140:8, μὴ παραδῷς με κύριε. . .ἁμαρτωλῷ, cf. 139:5). Furthermore, Marcus demonstrates that Mark's Gospel shows indisputable awareness of the biblical contexts from which these citations are culled. They are not citations at random; on the contrary, the circumstances in which Jesus finds himself bring to mind precisely these other contexts in which the righteous plead to God for assistance. Amidst suffering and enemies, the righteous trust in God alone, submit to him, and hope for vindication. In the Old Testament, this vindication is supposed to take place within the present life. In texts contemporary with the New Testament, the notion of God's vindication is in the process of being redefined; the ultimate vindication may be in the future.[59]

The tradition of the righteous sufferer, most often voiced in psalm form, has been labelled "Psalms of the Righteous Sufferer" in biblical scholarship.[60] Although this is a modern label, it fits the material well. Two ancient texts suggest that the righteous sufferer was a well-established topos in Jewish theology. In 4 Macc 18, the mother of the martyrs praises their father, who instructed them in the law and the prophets while they were still children. He sung to them from the psalms of David: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous" (πολλαὶ αἱ θλίψεις τῶν δικαίων, 15), which is not a citation from any particular text, but echoes several. The other text of relevance is Wis 2:12–20. That passage reveals the other side of the coin. It is a typical rhetorical *prosopoiia*, where the opponents of the righteous are made to speak for themselves. Their plan is to put the theology of the righteous to test. Ironically they say: ". . . if the righteous man is God's child, He will help him, and He will deliver him from his adversaries" (v. 18), which brings to mind the mockery in Mark 15:29–32, 36.

According to Mark, Jesus alluded to this biblical tradition, which was characterized by a pattern of simultaneous complaint and trust. As for complaint, the righteous find themselves bodily affected by distress or in agony. The physical descriptions are at times figurative (Ps 6:3–4, 7–8; 17:5–6; 21:7–8, 15–18; 30:8–11;

59 See Wis 5:15–16. The vindications in 2 Macc 6–7 and 4 Macc bear witness to such developments as well, as do the experiences mirrored in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch; see Chapter 3 in the present study.

60 Lothar Ruppert, *Der leidende Gerechte und seine Feinde: Eine Wortfelduntersuchung* (Würzburg: Echter, 1973); Karl Theodor Kleinknecht, *Der leidende Gerechtfertigte: Die alttestamentlich-jüdische Tradition vom "leidenden Gerechten'" und ihre Rezeption bei Paulus* (WUNT 2.13; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), 1–166. See also Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, *The Psalms of Lament in Mark's Passion: Jesus' Davidic Suffering* (SNTSMS 142; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 179–91.

33:19; 37:11; 41:3, 6a (=12a).11; 42:5a; 54:3, 5–6; 101:4–6, all as per the Septuagint). We will now give some examples:

– Of how the righteous sufferer describes himself (adjectives and nouns): ἀσθενής, στεναγμός, ὠδῖνες ᾅδου, ὠδῖνες θανάτου, σκώληξ, ὄνειδος, ταπείνοσις, ἀνάγκη, ὀδύνη, θλῖψις, περίλυπος, φόβος, τρόμος, κόπος.
– Of the verbs used to describe distress: ταράσσω, κοπιάω, ἐκτάρασσω, ἐκμυκτηρίζω, ἀσθενέω, συντρίβω, θλίβω, λυπέω, πλήσσω, ξηραίνω, καταισχύνω. Since the righteous sufferer is the victim here, many of these verbs appear in the passive voice. If we compare Jesus at prayer in the garden, as recounted by Mark, with these observations, there is limited overlap with regard to the terminology itself, but two significant terms are found: περίλυπος, λυπέω.[61]
– Of how the righteous suffer physically from anguish: shaking bones, tears, eyes, stomach and soul terrified, bones, heart, stomach and tongue affected, power dried up, heart breaking in pieces, light of eyes gone, timidity about death (δειλία θανάτου ἐπέπεσεν ἐπ᾽ ἐμε, 54:5). Comparing Jesus at prayer in the garden, as recounted by both Mark and Matthew, to this tradition reveals overlap with regard to distress having physical consequences and the dread of death. The phrase ἕως θανάτου is echoed in the prominence given to death in this tradition (ὠδῖνες ᾅδου, ὠδῖνες θανάτου, see above).

In the midst of such trials, the righteous entrust themselves to God and await his help and rescue. They submit to God in hoping for his vindication. Complaint and trust are held together in prayer. Prayer is the means whereby they trust themselves to God: Ps 6:5, 10; 21:6, 9, 20–22; 17:7; 30:10, 14, 15–17; 33:18; 37:10, 22–23; 41:6b, 12b; 42:5b; 54:2; 68:14–19; 101:2–3; 117:5–7.[62]

It is precisely in distressful circumstances that trust manifests itself in prayer. Hence, agony and prayer appear simultaneously, making the pairing that is at the very heart of this tradition. Courageous masculinity and virtuous silence, as described earlier in the present study, do not emerge in this theological tradition. By contrast, the life of the pious inherently includes distress. This provides a framework for understanding the Gethsemane scene as Mark reports it: agony, suffering, physical consequences, trusting in and submissiveness to God. The distress, in fact, emphasizes the dependence on God. It is precisely when left alone that the righteous demonstrate righteousness in entrusting themselves to God alone. Friends falling asleep and the solitude of

61 For an extensive list of such terms, with an emphasis on Hebrew phrasings, see Ruppert, *Der leidende Gerechte*, 179–227.

62 Cf. Ps 24:15–22; 33:18–21; 90:14–16.

Jesus echo this biblical tradition in how the righteous sufferer is abandoned and left alone to call upon God as the sole aid.

Scriptural motifs used to portray the righteous' entrusting themselves to God when surrounded by enemies whether from outside or within are applied to Jesus. Pain and distress reinforce the prayer to God and motivate God to alter the situation of the righteous. Furthermore, the description of unfortunate situations serves to point out that God is the only assistance available: "Jesus' complaint about his depression thus stands within a biblical context of ultimate trust in God's purposes."[63] The motifs drawn on are in fact signs of trust and belief. Is Jesus surrounded by enemies as well? The story gradually brings enemies into play (see below), at which point the main "enemy" from which Jesus hopes to be rescued is the "hour," which implies that the plan assigned by God works much like the prototypical enemies in the tradition on the righteous sufferer.

## 5.4 Paradoxical Gethsemane

Sharyn Echols Dowd comments on the Gethsemane scene as follows: "The scene is terrible, not because Jesus must suffer, but because his suffering is the will of God who is powerful enough to prevent it, and who has eliminated so much suffering in the narrative prior to this scene.... this petition is the only one in the gospel which does *not* result in God's powerful deliverance."[64] Dowd's comment is well-taken and paves the way for a fundamental tension or paradox at work in this gospel.

In her recent study, Laura C. Sweat points out the importance of paradoxes in the Second Gospel, of absurdities that carry significant meaning.[65] Divine actions are presented as paradoxes, inconsistencies, and in tension. Recognition of paradoxes is central to grasping what goes on in this Gospel. They are important vehicles of the mysterious character of what God does and how he acts. Hence, they are important in acknowledging that a complete understanding of God remains out of reach until everything is eventually revealed (Mark 4:22). Sweat depicts how God's revelatory acts according to the parable chapter (4) is accompanied by concealment and how God both confirms and counters Scripture, applying that phenomenon to Isa 6:9–10

63 Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 984.

64 Dowd, *Prayer*, 150, 161.

65 Laura C. Sweat, *The Theological Role of Paradox in the Gospel of Mark* (LNTS 492; London: T&T Clark, 2013).

(the hardening) in Mark 4:10–12 and the basic fact that many also come to see and understand. Furthermore, the hardening of Isa 6:9–10 is countered in the figure of the sower himself, who sows abundantly and willingly wastes costly seed. The hardening and wasting in order to receive a good harvest are paradoxically intertwined.

Sweat argues that this also sheds light on Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane.[66] Jesus calls into question the suffering and death that has been plotted since Mark 3:6. Jesus' prayer asks that God alter his manner of bringing about his plan of salvation: "God's action with respect to scripture is dynamic. Therefore, it can be the 'will of God' (14.36) to seek the fulfillment of one scripture over another in surprising ways."[67] This is what the anguished Jesus hopes and pleads for: there must be a way to fulfill Scripture without resulting in his suffering and death. "If Jesus' request to God is in line with previous divine action that both counters and confirms scripture, then Gethsemane ceases to be such an inexplicable anomaly in Mark's presentation."[68] Sweat's starting point in reading the relevant story is God's omnipotence, which is noted in verse 36. In that light the prayer is "a request for God, who can do the impossible, to work creatively through situations without apparent alternatives."[69]

I am sympathetic with much of Sweat's exegesis, but her Gethsemane interpretation is less than totally convincing. Making God's omnipotence a point of departure is indeed helpful for a theological understanding of this troublesome passage (see below), but God's omnipotence does not play a role in the paradoxes she works out in her study. Except in the garden scene, God's omnipotence does not appear explicitly in Mark 4 or in the Passion Narrative. Paradoxes in divine actions cannot fully explain the doubtful and reluctant attitude taken in Gethsemane by the main protagonist in making God's plan come true. It is characteristic of the paradoxes that inconsistencies and implied tensions make equal claims to be true; it is precisely this combination that conveys the mysterious nature of how God acts. This is not the case in Gethsemane. The position taken by Jesus in his prayer never becomes one side of a coin that combines with its counterpart to make up a mysterious truth. On the contrary, Jesus' request is denied and thus does not form a paradox alongside other paradoxes in this Gospel.

66 Sweat, *Paradox*, 115–32.

67 Sweat, *Paradox*, 116.

68 Sweat, *Paradox*, 121, *pace* Feldmeier, *Krisis*, who claims that Jesus in Mark finds himself in a personal and spiritual crisis.

69 Sweat, *Paradox*, 126.

### 5.4.1 *Omnipotence and Prayer*

A narrative perspective does bring some paradoxes into view. One obvious paradox that Sweat rightly notes is that God acts through the enemy Judas, the antagonistic Jews, and the devil to bring about his plan. To understand the Gethsemane scene, it is necessary to return to God's omnipotence more specifically. God's omnipotence resonates elsewhere in the Second Gospel and helps to construe a theology of Gethsemane.[70] The first example refers to the sick and needy who approached Jesus, begging for relief and help. The leper in Mark 1:40–42 is especially illustrative. He falls on his knees (γονυπετῶν)[71] and says to Jesus: "If you will, you can make me clean (ἐαν θέλῃς δύνασαί με καθαρίσαι)."[72] Jesus also falls (ἔπιπτεν) to the ground in the garden and likewise calls upon the will of God, hoping that God is able to provide relief. In this way the readers are prepared for Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane, even from the opening chapter of the story. Mark 9:22–23 is also relevant. A man brings his demonic son to Jesus, hoping for help: "'... but if you are able (εἴ τι δύνῃ) to do anything, have pity on us and help us. Jesus said to him: 'If you are able! All things can be done (πάντα δυνατὰ) for the one who believes."[73] Both texts echo the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane or vice versa: an intense prayer caused by a desperate situation. Those in need find compassion and relief with Jesus and he responds to their requests and prayers. Gethsemane turns the table, but only for Jesus. Jesus is cast in the role of a supplicant, turning to God in a desperate situation. While those who approached *him* found help, Jesus' prayer is left unanswered. His prayer is met with silence, his plea ignored. These similarities serve both to understand the nature of Jesus' prayer and to separate his path from the needy who turn to him. Mark is here preparing the ground for what we may label a Gethsemane theology.

Somewhat different but still highly relevant is Mark 11:23–24. Jesus instructs his disciples about faith and prayer: "So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (v. 24). True prayers find a responsive hearing with God. Since Jesus in Gethsemane prays in words

70 Sweat, *Paradox*, 122–23 touches upon the issue, but does not bring the relevance of this observation to bear on Gethsemane. Dowd, *Prayer* notes how the omnipotence formula is attached to prayer, and brings this to bear on Gethsemane in ways similar to some of my observations here.

71 This is missing in some manuscripts, most importantly in Vaticanus; hence, NA 28th edition has it in brackets.

72 My own translation; NRSV renders "if you choose."

73 That passage is strikingly similar to Jesus' prayer, as it moves from an "if" condition to stating as a fact that God is able.

reminiscent of the Lord's Prayer (see below), it is obvious that his prayer accords with faith, as Mark 11 urges. In his case, no response occurs. What he taught his disciples did not materialize when it came to himself.

Finally, we turn to the dialogue between Jesus and his disciples prompted by his conversation with the rich man (Mark 10:17–22). This conversation centers on the question of "inheriting eternal life" (v. 17) or "entering the kingdom of God" (vv. 24–25). Verse 26 summarizes the matter into a question of finding salvation: τίς δύναται σωθῆναι. The answer to this is given in verse 27: "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible (πάντα γὰρ δυνατὰ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ)." God's omnipotence manifests itself primarily in bringing salvation. In effect, this is what Jesus seeks in his prayer in the garden, a reprieve from his impending death. He does so by referring precisely to God's omnipotence in bringing salvation, as he had once taught his disciples. In his case though, God's omnipotence provided no salvation for him. What can be deduced from this?

### 5.4.2 *A Man of Faith: Unlocking an Anti-Text*

In the passages addressed above, "faith" is the means whereby God's omnipotence is transformed into help for individuals. In Mark's story, the sick and needy in particular embody this process (2:5; 5:34; 10:52), but it applies to the disciples as well (4:40; 11:22). Jesus at prayer in Gethsemane echoes these utterances of faith; he joins those who entrust themselves to God's omnipotence. This is highly important since it implies that Jesus is portrayed as acting in faith. The analogy with others trusting in God's power to do everything is essential here. In Gethsemane Jesus displays not cowardice but manifests what faith really is. One might object that Mark in these passages speaks about faith in contrast to doubt and divided hearts, which is precisely how Jesus appears in Gethsemane. The two parts of the Gethsemane prayer together form one prayer, thus making it difficult to consider it a prayer of the divided heart. On the contrary, what Jesus here demonstrates is that he is not at all selfish or divided. He submits in spite of the fact that his primary desire was otherwise. While Peter in Mark 8:33 is blamed for grasping only what befits human beings as opposed to God's logic, in Gethsemane Jesus gives up on his own lights and embraces "divine things." In short, faith is a key component in how Mark reports and construes this incident.

The instances noted above portray situations of desperate need, prayers, and salvation in which God's omnipotence comes into play. All can easily be applied to how Jesus found himself in Gethsemane. He also called upon God's ability to do everything. *Pace* Sweat, the real paradox with regard to Gethsemane is that God's omnipotence did *not* benefit Jesus, even though he

found himself in a situation which the Second Gospel on three occasions has presented as situations in which God's omnipotence manifests itself.

Jesus' way is unique. Gethsemane disconnects him from much of Mark's Gospel. He was in need like those approaching him for help, but he did not find the help that he offered them. He prayed as he taught his disciples to pray, but he found no hearing. He sought salvation for himself since God saves humans out of his omnipotence, but he failed to receive it. This demonstrates that the Gethsemane scene gains importance and meaning when seen against the backdrop of other stories told in the Gospel. It is an anti-text, but that fact is precisely the key to unlocking its meaning in Mark's Gospel. The anomaly of Gethsemane is created through a narrative reading but finds a resolution when the larger story is taken into account. The story announces that God is in charge from the very outset (Mark 1:15) and conveys to the reader that God is in control; accordingly, this is also the perspective from the larger story that bears upon the Gethsemane incident. This perspective, however, is not necessarily that of Jesus' experience in that particular story. He had to struggle over this question. The focal point is Jesus' own perspective, but the larger story provides the readers a setting and perspective for this event.

The disconnectedness of Jesus paves the way for an altruistic interpretation of Gethsemane: what he offered to and taught others was denied to him. From a narrative perspective, Jesus' prayer to escape the cup is rightly understood in the light of the other "cup references" in Mark's Gospel (10:38–45 and 14:23). Altruism is essential to both passages. Thus the disconnectedness or the paradoxes of Gethsemane prepare the ground for a theology of altruism based on what takes place fully in the Passion Narrative. The prayer is in effect tantamount to Jesus' prayer in Mark 15:34 about being abandoned for the sake of bringing salvation to others. The Gethsemane prayer thus narratively foreshadows the ridicule he faced on the cross: "… save yourself (σῶσον σεαυτὸν), and come down from the cross!'…, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself (ἄλλους ἔσωσεν, ἑαυτὸν οὐ δύναται σῶσαι)" (Mark 15:30–31). The topic of "saving oneself" is important in the stories about Socrates, the Maccabean martyrs, and Polycarp.[74] They all refused opportunities to "save" themselves and in all three cases, their refusals were given an altruistic meaning; with Socrates it was the instruction of his friends, while with the Maccabean martyrs and Polycarp they brought some sacrificial salvation to their people. Likewise, in

74 Indeed, the idea of "saving oneself" in exactly the same Greek terms is found regarding Crito's plans to have Socrates escape prison (Chapter 2.1 in the present study), similar opportunities offered to the martyrs in 4 Macc 6:27, and the Christian martyrs (*Mart. Pol.* 1:2). See Chapter 20.7.3 in this study.

Gethsemane Jesus faced anticipatory sufferings from which other people were to benefit. In fact, Mark has laid the foundation for a widely embraced way to make sense of this potentially embarrassing story.

## 5.5 The Lord's Prayer as Subtext

Many have noted that the Lord's Prayer is recognizably woven into this passage, although Mark never cites that prayer.[75] This claim finds substantiation in the following observations. In the first place, Jesus addresses God as "Father." Second, the role attributed to God's will (οὐ τί ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλὰ τί σύ) echoes Matt 6:10. This prayer ("your will be done") is missing in Luke 11 but is found in many manuscripts, likely under Matthew's influence, thus demonstrating both that this prayer circulated widely and how firmly the idea of God's will was associated with this prayer even in early traditions.[76] Third, the "coming into temptation" theme (Mark 14:38) within a passage on prayer is worth noting. This echoes Matt 6:13 and Luke 11:4: "Do not bring (εἰσένέγκῃς) us into temptation (εἰς πειρασμόν)." Although in Mark 14:38 ἔρχεσθαι replaces εἰσφέρειν, it must be considered an echo of this prayer in Jesus' admonition to his disciples. Furthermore, this alteration comes naturally as a consequence of the grammatical subject involved.[77] God's involvement in Matt 6:13 and Luke 11:4 has now been altered; the perspective is that of the disciples themselves, so "coming" is more natural. We need also to remind ourselves that no one single version of the Lord's Prayer likely ever existed. The texts of the different gospels, including the textual variants, differ too much to arrive at a conclusion of one definitive version.

Fourth, it is worth considering that Jesus' prayer to be delivered from the hour or the cup represents an example of the last prayer in the Pater Noster: "but rescue (ῥῦσαι) us from the evil (one)/from evil" (Matt 6:13b).[78] Many manuscripts of Luke 11:4 included this element, though that it is not the oldest reading. Matthew 6:13b is introduced with a contrastive "but" (ἀλλα) indicating how closely this prayer is associated with the previous one on temptation. Reading

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75 See for example Sjef van Tilborg, "A Form-Criticism of the Lord's Prayer," *NovT* 14 (1972): 96. Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 976–77, 985 says that this prayer was known to Mark's community.

76 See Chapters 15.1.2–15.3.1 of the present study.

77 See Jean Carmignac, *Recherches sur le 'Notre Pére'* (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1969), 268–71.

78 It is worth noting that in Ps 42:1LXX, so prominent in the background of the agony, the righteous sufferer requests to be rescued (ῥῦσαί με).

the Gethsemane prayer from this perspective paves the way for considering it a prayer uttered in times of trial or temptation. If τοῦ πονηροῦ is taken to be masculine and applied to the Gethsemane scene, Jesus is here involved not only in struggling about the "hour" and God's assigned plan; he is also fighting the devil himself. The temptation he faces has demonic dimensions, as already indicated in the introduction to Jesus' ministry (Mark 1:13). The devil is the agent behind temptations (cf. Mark 3:27; 4:15).

According to Matthew and Luke, Jesus instructed his disciples in speaking the Lord's Prayer and the Gethsemane scene suggests that the author of Mark's Gospel was familiar with this prayer. Mark differs contextually from Q, the source behind Matthew and Luke, on this point, but like them he implies a didactic setting. Jesus is portrayed as praying that prayer himself, thus offering an *exemplum*.[79] Sjef van Tilborg points out that while Mark does not mention the Lord's Prayer, the Gethsemane prayer is constructed in a way reminiscent of that particular text. From this, he deduces that the Lord's Prayer was not known to Mark's congregation, but originated in a liturgical reflection upon the Gethsemane story.[80] If we accept that the Lord's Prayer did circulate in one single form, it is likely that Mark 11:25 ("... so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you tour trespasses") echoes Matt 6:15. This would mean that the Gethsemane scene is not the only passage in Mark's Gospel drawing on the Lord's Prayer, a fact that proves van Tilborg's view doubtful.

What has now been said has certain implications for the understanding of Jesus' prayer in the garden. Jesus' asking for deliverance is neither offensive nor embarrassing. On the contrary, this is the prayer of a devout man speaking in the midst of turmoil and pain. His shuddering fear makes his obedience and submission stand out. The seriousness of his anguish made it even more demanding for him to say "not what I want, but what you want." His being afraid thus serves to emphasize his willingness to submit to the Father's will, at any cost. There is no attempt at all to hide Jesus' anxiety, his fear of dying, and or his concern about what lies ahead in his apocalyptic struggle. Therefore, Jesus finds his place among the righteous sufferers of the Psalms who are characterized by lament, prayers, and confidence. Through the narrative setting found here, this legacy now continues into the Lord's Prayer.

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79 Mathias Nygaard, *Prayer in the Gospels: A Theological Exegesis of the Ideal Pray-er* (Biblical Interpretation Series 114; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 93–97 argues that the exemplary function of this scene is heightened by the fact that this is the *only* place where we have the actual words prayed by Jesus.

80 Van Tilborg, "A Form-Criticism of the Lord's Prayer," 104.

Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane is shaped by the Lord's Prayer, with regard both to the plea to be rescued and to his obedience to God's will. This means that both parts of the prayer are accounted for in the Pater Noster, and even more so in the temptation or time of trial motif found there. Julian the Emperor pointed out that this incident, although he does particularly not have Mark in mind, was poorly witnessed, as the disciples were asleep while this happened.[81] One source to draw upon was likely the Lord's Prayer. The memory of this incident certainly had some blanks to be filled in, with the Lord's Prayer offering convenient help. What was more natural than to imagine Jesus using words from the prayer he taught his disciples and that echoed his relationship to God the Father? The role of the Lord's Prayer nicely fits the argument that this story is an elaborated *chreia* (anecdote) taking Jesus as example (see below).[82] Through the role of the Lord's Prayer, we now gather that a shift of emphasis takes place from Jesus' own agony to the challenges of discipleship.

## 5.6 Eschatological Temptation

In his commentary on Mark's Gospel, Joel Marcus has convincingly argued that the Gethsemane scene has "deliberatively been fashioned ... as an echo of the eschatological prophecies in ch. 13."[83] This observation is important as it serves to explain why this has become a paraenetical text where watching and keeping awake become crucial and why this incident has been construed as a temptation, as clearly stated from verse 38 on. This observation paves the way for understanding the form in which this incident is related. Let us take a look at the similarities:

81 See Chapter 4.5 of the present study.

82 *Pace* M.D. Goulder, "The Composition of the Lord's Prayer," *JTS* 14 (1963): 32–45, who attempts to show that the Pater Noster is, in fact, created by the author of the Gospel of Matthew on the basis of Mark's rendering of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane and his teaching on forgiveness.

83 Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 987. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 156–57 had pointed out such a connection, but did not work it out in detail. The similarities I present here are inspired by Marcus' list of similarities (p. 976), although I make some additions.

| **The eschatological drama of the world himself and the disciples (Mark 13)** | **The eschatological drama of Jesus (Gethsemane) (Mark 14)** |
|---|---|
| Peter, James, John, and Andreas (3) | Peter, James, and John (33) |
| Suffering (θλῖψις) (19, 24) | Jesus is distressed and agitated: "I am deeply grieved even to death" (33–34) |
| "that hour" (ὥρα) (11, 32) | The hour (ὥρα) might pass from me (35); The hour (ὥρα) has come (41). |
| The disciples will be "handed over" (παραδίδωμι) (9, 11, 12) to councils, synagogues, governors, and kings | The Son of Man is "handed over" (παραδίδωμι) into the hands of sinners |
| Pray (προσεύχομαι): imperative (18) | Jesus prays three times; Imperative (προσεύχομαι) (32, 38, 39) |
| That you may be saved (σῴζω): passive form (13, 20) | "Remove this cup from me" (cf. John 12:27: (σῶσόν με) |
| Summer is near (ἐγγύς) (28); he is near (ἐγγύς) (29) | My betrayer is at hand (ἐγγίζω) (42) |
| You will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory (26; Dan 7:13); a vision of glory | The Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners (41); humiliation |
| "Keep alert" in imperative (ἀγρυπνεῖτε) (33),[84] synonymous with γρηγορέω (34) | "Simon, are you asleep (καθεύδεις)?"(37b). "Are you still sleeping (καθεύδετε) and taking your rest?" (41) |
| "Keep awake" twice in imperative (γρηγορεῖτε) (35, 36) | γρηγορεῖτε in imperative (34, 38) |

84 It is worth noting that Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, several majuscules and minuscules, the Majority text, and most Latin, Syriac, and Coptic translations here read ἀγρυπνεῖτε καὶ προσεύχεσθε, which according to the NA 28th edition is a harmonization with Mark 14:38.

TABLE (*cont.*)

| **The eschatological drama of the world himself and the disciples (Mark 13)** | **The eschatological drama of Jesus (Gethsemane) (Mark 14)** |
|---|---|
| The master of the house is coming (ἔρχεται) and finding (εὕρῃ) them asleep (καθεύδοντας) (36) | "He came (ἔρχεται) and found (εὑρίσκει) them sleeping" (καθεύδοντας) 37a. "Once more he came (ἐλθὼν) and found (εὗρεν) them sleeping (καθεύδοντας)" (40) |

This list of corresponding terms and motifs carries the apocalyptic atmosphere of ch. 13 into the agony scene in Gethsemane, a fact with implications for how this scene appears in a wider theological context. Marcus points out in particular that Jesus' coming and finding his disciples asleep demonstrates that the time of which Jesus had warned has already arrived, so he calls upon them to stay alert. Furthermore, this list serves to explain how a text about Jesus himself becomes exemplary to the disciples; it explains why this becomes a paraenetical passage about temptation. These two aspects are held together not only by eschatological testing but also by motives taken from the Lord's Prayer (vv. 36 and 38).

In Gethsemane, Jesus faced eschatological tribulation and testing as his passion was drawing near. Although testing, trial, or temptation are not used specifically with reference to Jesus, two facts make precisely that concept an important entry point for understanding this passage. In the first place, Jesus' allusive employment of the Lord's Prayer (v. 36) assumes that contrasting wills are at play and the second allusion to this prayer (v. 38) explicitly addresses testing or temptation. In the second place, the way Jesus works as an example assumes a fundamental link between what he and his disciples will face, despite differences in specifics. Both face eschatological testing. As Marcus notes, the passage is full of words that have an apocalyptic connotation in both Mark's Gospel and the rest of the New Testament, which also applies to "hour," "cup," "sleeping," and "testing."

The sleeping disciples represent an immediate manifestation of Jesus' prediction (Mark 14:26–31) that they will abandon him,[85] but this clearly takes on

85 Verse 41 about sleeping and resting themselves is most likely mockery; thus also Collins, *Mark*, 682.

a figurative meaning in accordance with Mark 13 and similar texts.[86] According to Jung-Sik Cha, the devil plays virtually no role in Mark's Gethsemane scene,[87] but the apocalyptic setting militates against that conclusion. Jesus has previously been tempted by the devil (Mark 1:13) and this antagonist is at work throughout Jesus' ministry (Mark 4:15). The many exorcisms provide evidence that Jesus is constantly combatting the devil, who tries to place obstacles in front of his ministry.[88] Hence, Peter is seen as cooperating with the devil when he objects to the predicted death of Jesus (see above).

In Gethsemane, Jesus himself becomes a target in a way unseen earlier in the story. It is worth reflecting on how differently Jesus appears in Mark 4:35–41 and in the present passage. In Mark 4, Jesus is asleep in the midst of crisis, bringing to mind Crito's reaction to Socrates sleeping peacefully.[89] Gethsemane alters that picture dramatically. Jesus' life, destiny, and mission are now drawn into conflict in a way that leads him into despair. As Marcus puts it: "Jesus is then engaged not just in a personal confrontation with his own death but in eschatological warfare against cosmic forces of evil, and his anguish is part of an ongoing battle for the salvation of the world."[90] My exegesis has argued that Jesus in his agony is involved with his impending death, with God's plan (or anointed hour), and with the devil.

Vers 38b about the spirit being willing but the flesh weak formulates what Peter embodies in the Passion Narrative. Peter declares his commitment to Jesus as even greater than the others (Mark 14:29), but ends up denying him three times. The discrepancy between his words and acts captures human beings as they face trials or temptations. This apocalyptically oriented tension serves to heighten the need for constant prayers, staying vigilant, and enduring.

## 5.7 God in Absentia

The third and final part of Jesus' dicta brings the event to a close in ways worth observing. The much-contested meaning of ἀπέχει holds the key.

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86 Feldmeier, *Krisis*, 192–97. For the metaphorical use of "staying awake," see also Evald Lövestam, *Spiritual Wakefulness in the New Testament* (Lunds Universitets Årsskrift Avd. 1. Bd. 55. Nr. 3; Lund: Gleerup, 1963). However, Lövestam ignores the Gethsemane text's movement between wakefulness in its real and figurative meaning; see pp. 65–66, 70.

87 Cha, "*Confronted with Death*," 92–93.

88 Donald H. Juel, *The Gospel of Mark* (Interpreting Biblical Texts; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 107–17.

89 See Chapter 2.1 of this study.

90 Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 984.

G.H. Boobyer noticed that any expositor of verse 41 "must possibly concede that all attempts at interpretation are likely to fall short of completely convincing demonstration."[91] Boobyer takes Judas to be the grammatical subject of the verb, referring to his taking possession of Jesus. The closest parallel to such use of ἀπέχει, Boobyer finds in Phlm 15 where it means to "receive." In my opinion, this verb in Philemon cannot be transferred to Mark 14. In Philemon it is clearly a financial term,[92] which does not fit the context of Gethsemane. Actually, the way Paul rhetorically "plays" with contrasts here (ἐχωρίσθη and ἀπέχῃς) is indicative of another meaning in this verb, which makes sense in the passage of our concern here (see below). It is through the separation that Onesimus found a way back to Philemon. This word play on different aspects implied in ἀπέχει is here important. Furthermore, Boobyer fails to do justice to the present tense of this verb, and that a reference to Judas is unlikely. His appearance in Mark 14:43 picks up on 14:10.

NRSV represents many interpreters by choosing an impersonal "enough!" directed at the sleeping disciples, in accordance with the Vulgate's *sufficit*.[93] Some manuscripts add τέλος here, implying that ἀπέχει means the consummation of the end.[94] In spite of some minor differences among these manuscripts, they unanimously take ἀπέχει to indicate some sense of arrival. The subject τὸ τέλος may be inferred from Luke 22:37, which makes for a more simple reading.[95] A growing consensus points out that this verb normally means "to be distant or far away."[96] Both Marcus and Craig Evans take it this way, but render it as a question: "Is it (*i.e.* the hour) far off?"[97]

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91 G.H. Boobyer, "ΑΠΕΧΕΙ in Mark XIV.41," *NTS* 2 (1955):47.

92 See Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 93–102, 128–31 and Peter Artzt-Grabner, *Philemon* (PKNT 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 223–24.

93 Thus also Collins, *Mark*, 683.

94 Thus Codex D, Codex W, Codex Θ, some Old Latin manuscripts and the minuscule group F13. Old Latin manuscripts c: *adest enim consummacio*; q: *sufficit finis*.

95 Frans Neirynck, *Duality in Mark: Contributions to the Study of the Marcan Redaction* (BETL 31; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), 27, 63–72 does not mention this case in particular, but draws attention to λυπεῖσθαι, ἀδημονεῖν and περίλυπος (vv. 33b, 34) and εἰ δυνατόν ἐστιν and πάντα δυνατά σοι (vv. 35–36). However, his examples are more or less synonymous, and whether that is the case with ἀπέχει and ἦλθεν is precisely the point. This is not the most common meaning of ἀπέχειν and it is the question of grammatical subject for ἀπέχει that is not indicated.

96 BDAG s.v.; LSJ s.v.

97 Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 974, 981; Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 407, 416–17.

Nestle-Aland's 28th edition does not put a question mark here, which suggests an affirmative meaning in accordance with what Reinhard Feldmeier has argued in detail: "Gott is fern."[98] Feldmeier sees this from the perspective of prayer language in the Septuagint: "Die räumlichen Metaphern 'Nähe' und 'Ferne' bringen also eine Grunderfahrung des Betens zum Ausdruck, die Israel mit dem Alten Orient teilt,. . ."[99] Jesus has come to understand that God remains silent to his prayer. His failure to appear anticipates Jesus' cry on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Mark 15:34) and represents the culmination of his solitude portrayed so vividly here. Furthermore, this interpretation follows naturally in the wake of Jesus as a man of faith who finds no response to his prayer. This is the immediate context of ἀπέχει.

This finds corroboration in several textual details of significance. In the first place, the passage closes with ἤγγικεν, remarkable for a text where a growing solitude is developed. The disciples are absent, God is far away, and the only figure closing in is Judas (v. 43). Second, the "hour" that Jesus wanted to pass from him (παρέλθῃ) has now arrived (ἦλθεν), which suggests an intended contrast. Finally, God, for whom everything is possible, remains silent or distant. The passage is closed by Jesus' coming to terms with these facts. He moves from turmoil to resolve and aligns himself with the predictions about his passion found throughout the Gospel. The gap between those texts and the garden scene is now narrowed. Jesus accords with the second part of his prayer, being obedient and submitting to God's will. From a grammatical point of view, the subjunctive (ἄγωμεν) verse 42 might be taken as a call to flee or run away.[100] However, this view would mean that Jesus had given in to his agony and retreated, which runs contrary to verse 41, in which he accepts what is to come. It is rather a call to face the coming events.[101]

## 5.8 Gethsemane Remembered

We have observed that the Gethsemane scene, although linked primarily to the biography of Jesus, carries marks of an instructional purpose. Why does a story at home in Jesus' life story include didactic aspects where Jesus addresses his disciples? This duality reflects precisely how the remembrances of Jesus were

98 Feldmeier, *Krisis*, 209–15.

99 Feldmeier, *Krisis*, 213.

100 Celsus makes just such a reading important to his critique (Chapter 4.1.3 in the present study).

101 Thus also Evans, *Mark 8:27–16*:20, 418.

negotiated to be relevant, connecting past with present. The following indicates that progymnastic patterns, more precisely those of *chreia*, are at work:

> A *chreia* is a concise statement or action which is attributed with aptness (μετ' εὐστοχίας) to some specified character or to something analogous to a character. Closely related to the *chreia* are maxim and reminiscence (ἀπομνημόνευμα). For every concise maxim, if it is attributed to a character, produces a *chreia*. And the reminiscence is an action or saying that is useful for living (λόγος βιωφελής).... It has the name "*chreia*" because of its excellence (κατ' ἐξοχὴν), for more than other exercises it is useful in many ways for life (χρειώδες ἐστὶ τῷ βιῷ).[102]

*Chreiai* are rhetorical exercises that preserve and elaborate memories in a way that makes them "useful for living."[103] They preserve memories of teachers' lessons, their statements or actions, or a mixed form of both. Theon describes mixed *chreiai* as "those which share characteristics of both the sayings species and the action-species but make their point with the action" (54).[104] C*hreia* 45 is an oft-cited example: "A Laconian, when someone asked him where the Lacedaemonians consider the boundaries of their land to be, showed his spear." The example brings to mind a symbolic action. A *chreia* is a pointed saying apt to be remembered and from which practical insights relevant for conducting life were drawn or for which relevance shaped the act of remembrance. An example of a *chreia* proper is found in Papyrus Bouriant 1. 141–68:

> Seeing (ἰδὼν) a fly on his table, he said: "Even Diogenes keeps parasites."
> Seeing a woman being educated, he said. "Wow! A sword is being sharpened."
> Seeing a woman giving advice to a woman, he said: "An asp is being supplied venom from a viper."

102 Theon of Alexandria Progymnasmata 1–8 and 25–26; quoted according to Ronald F. Hock and Edward N. O'Neill, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric. Volume 1: The Progymnasmata* (SBL Text and Translation series 27; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986) where similar definitions given by other handbooks are rendered as well. See also *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Translated with Introduction and Notes by George A. Kennedy; Writings from the Greco-Roman World 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

103 See Ronald F. Hock and Edward N. O'Neill, *The Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric: Classroom Exercises* (Writings from the Greco-Roman World 2; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002).

104 Hock an O'Neill, *Progymnasmata*, 88–89, 105–107.

> Seeing an Ethiopian eating white bread, he said: "Look! Night is swallowed by day."
> Seeing an Ethiopian defecating, he said: "Look! A kettle with a hole in it."[105]

A good *chreia* facilitated memory by means of brevity and featuring a prominent character. This is clearly seen in the *chreiai* given here. These are not expanded, but represent the brief and proper version of this genre. The situation is introduced in a conjunctive participle (ἰδὼν), which is the most common way to introduce a true *chreia*. The saying is attributed to a famous character who formulated a pointed saying for students, who would already be familiar with him. When Theon above says that a *chreia* is related to ἀπομνημόνευματα (reminiscences), he implies that it may be elaborated and expanded into a short and pointed story.[106] Remembrance here finds its narrative form. *Chreiai* and "reminiscences" sometimes overlap, and they are not sharply distinguished. Justin Martyr's labelling the gospels "the *apomnemoneumata* of the apostles" accords with this insight[107] and naturally paves the way for viewing gospel texts in this light. After all, the gospels nearly unanimously portray Jesus as a teacher surrounded by students, constantly instructing them.[108]

The elaboration of *chreiai* followed accepted patterns and structures. According to Hermogenes, the elaboration (ἐργασία) or paraphrase of a *chreia* may proceed in eight steps: 1) praise, 2) paraphrase or amplification, 3) rationale (explanation), 4) statement to the contrary, 5) statement from analogy, 6) example, 7) citation of authority, and 8) exhortation.[109] These eight points are typical with regard to how *chreiai* were expanded. For Samuel Byrskog,

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105 For these *chreiai*, see Hock and O'Neill, *The Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric*, 5–12 and Karl Olav Sandnes, "Antikk undervisning og en (kristen?) skolegutts kladdebok," *Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke* 82 (2011): 110–25.

106 Hock and O'Neill, *The Chreia and Ancient Rhetoric*, 83–93. For the development of *chreiai*, the so-called *ergasiai*, see also Marion C. Moeser, *The Anecdote in Mark, the Classical World and the Rabbis* (JSNTSup 227; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 82–87.

107 Loveday Alexander, "Memory and Tradition in the Hellenistic Schools," in *Jesus in Memory: Traditions in Oral and Scribal Perspectives* (ed. Werner H. Kelber and Samuel Byrskog; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), 113–53. See also Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitnesses Testimony* (Grand Rapids, Mich./Cambridge U.K.: Eerdmans, 2006), 214–17; cf. Chapter 10.3 in the present study.

108 Samuel Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher: Didactic Authority and Transmission in Ancient Israel, Ancient Judaism and the Matthean Community* (ConBNT 24; Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell, 1994).

109 Hermogenes 30–64 in Hock and O'Neill, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, 176–77.

"[t]he systematic search for Gospel *chreiai* has only begun,"[110] but some studies have embarked upon the task of identifying *chreiai* in the Gospel of Mark.[111] Such studies often proceed from Papias' statement on Mark's Gospel, preserved in Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.15, which indicates that Mark wrote "of the things said and done by the Lord. For he had neither heard the Lord nor followed him, though later on, as I said, [he had followed] Peter, who gave teachings in the form of *chreiai* (πρὸς τὰς χρείας), but not making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord's oracles ..." Joseph Kürzinger has demonstrated that Eusebius' text is replete with terms taken from ancient rhetorical criticism.[112] Accordingly, it is gradually being accepted among scholars that πρὸς τὰς χρείας is not to be rendered "according to needs/necessities,"[113] but as "in the form of *chreiai*."[114] In his *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (1952), Vincent Taylor suggested that parts of Mark's version of the passion (14:1–16:8) were examples of *chreiai*.[115] Recent research has picked up this suggestion in a more detailed and balanced way.

In the groundbreaking study *The Anecdote in Mark, the Classical World and the Rabbis* (2002), Marion C. Moeser investigates Mark 8:27–10:45 in the light of the *chreia* form, concluding that out of fourteen detachable stories, nine can be shown to be types of *chreiai*.[116] David B. Gowler argues that elaborations of *chreiai* are found in Mark 5:25–34, 11:15–17pp, and 11:27–33pp.[117] Byrskog makes

110 Samuel Byrskog, "The Transmission of the Jesus Tradition: Old and New Insights," *Early Christianity* 1 (2010): 460.

111 See for example Samuel Byrskog, "The Early Church as a Narrative Fellowship: An Exploratory Study of the Performance of the *Chreia*," *Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke* 78 (2007): 207–26 and Tobias Hägerland, *Jesus and the Forgiveness of Sins: An Aspect of His Prophetic Mission* (SNTSMS 150; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

112 Josef Kürzinger, *Papias von Hierapolis und die Evangelien des Neuen Testaments* (Eichstätter Materialien. Philosophie und Theologie 4; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1983), 50–56.

113 Thus LCL 1:297 [Lake].

114 Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History: History as Story* (WUNT 123; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 288–92; Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 217–30.

115 Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1952); see also Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (ET; Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1971), 152–64, although he does not cite the Gethsemane scene as a *chreia*.

116 Moeser, *The Anecdote in Mark*, 188–242. Jerome H. Neyrey, "Questions, Chreiai, and Challenges to Honor: The Interface of Rhetoric and Culture in Mark's Gospel," *CBQ* 60 (1998): 671, 674 gives the following list: Mark 2:1–12, 15–17, 18–22, 23–28; 3:1–6, 22–30, 31–35; 4:35–41; 6:1–6; 7:1–13 8:11–13; 9:9–13; 10:2–9, 13–16, 17–22, 35–41; 11:27–33; 12:13–17, 18–27, 28–34, and 35–37.

117 David B. Gowler, "The Chreia" in *The Historical Jesus in Context* (ed. Amy-Jill Levine, Dale C. Allison, Jr., and John Dominic Crossan; Princeton Readings in Religion; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 132–48.

Mark 1:29–39 an arrangement of a string of *chreiai*.[118] Under Byrskog's supervision, Tobias Hägerland has undertaken the task, arguing that Mark 2:6–12 developed from a *chreia* proper in verse 5: "When (ἰδὼν) Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' "[119] Is it possible that something similar is the case also with Mark 14:32–42, or at least parts of it?

### 5.8.1 Gethsemane *and* Chreia

Mark 14:37–38 resembles a proper *chreia*; although the commonly used ἰδὼν is absent, "he came and found" works in a similar fashion. The situation is indicated in the disciples' sleeping, which prompts Jesus to speak as in a *chreiai* (λέγει). There is a close correspondence between the situation depicted and what is being said; the narrative and dicta interact in a way that brings to mind the *chreia* concerning the Lacedaemonians above. This passage is about "sleep" throughout. The fact that Jesus addresses Peter, a named student, does not accord with absolutely standard practice but results from Peter's unique role in this Gospel.[120]

Jerome H. Neyrey has pointed to Mark's use of responsive *chreiai* that proceed from questions.[121] Verse 37b is such a question, challenging honor and provoking a response. This makes verse 38a, about wakefulness and praying, a responsive *chreia*. Furthermore, verse 38a turns from the second person singular to the plural, thus widening the scope, characteristic of a genre that so often aimed at providing some instruction.

Verse 38b provides a rationale by explaining the admonition that the human spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. This succinct statement nicely fits the *chreia* pattern. Furthermore, the threefold mention of the disciples asleep works as an amplification of this motif. As for opposite behavior, Peter is contrasted with Jesus; the two represent attitudes to be either avoided or imitated. Finally, the elaboration cites authorities; Jesus behaves according to scriptural traditions and even cites a Psalm. It is also to be noted that he speaks in terms that bring to mind the Lord's Prayer, which held pride of place within early Christian traditions of Jesus.[122] Based on these observations, Mark 14:32–42

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118 Byrskog, "The Early Church as a Narrative Fellowship."

119 Hägerland, *Jesus*, 232–34.

120 Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 165–82, 214–17.

121 Neyrey, "Questions, Chreiai, and Challenges to Honor." Neyrey does not liken 14:32–42 to a *chreia*, although he points out the interrogative style of verse 37.

122 See Karl Olav Sandnes, "'The First Prayer': Pater Noster in the Early Church" in *Early Christian Identity Formation* (ed. Reidar Hvalvik and Karl Olav Sandnes; WUNT 336; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 209–32 for bibliographical information.

shows dependence on progymnastic patterns known from the genre of elaborated *chreiai*. Due to the flexibility and freedom practiced along a continuum in ancient rhetorical exercises, it is reasonable to argue that the Gethsemane story with its dicta, especially verses 37–38, have been preserved in ways analogous to progymnastic exercises.

This rationale might be taken to imply that the Gethsemane scene is secondary, developed to illustrate a succinct proper *chreia*. However, it is difficult to imagine that the remembrance of this incident rests entirely upon a proper *chreia* like verses 37–38, since that would not account for Jesus' lament. The embarrassing potential of that particular element actually makes it less likely that Gethsemane was wholly made up after the fact, with no basis whatsoever in events.[123]

Similarities to the style of expanded *chreiai* show that the Gethsemane story was remembered according to how memories were handed down through progymnastic patterns. Taken together with the emphasis on Jesus' instructing his disciples, citing himself as an example in times of temptation makes Mark's version both a story of the crisis of Jesus and an instruction to the disciples.

### 5.8.2 *Summing Up*

We have observed a duality in the garden story; one is the portrayal of Jesus and his struggle to embrace the divine will, which affected Jesus emotionally as well as physically. Jesus is confident that God is able to alter his situation, thus opening "the real possibility that his request will be heard and granted."[124] The other aspect is the paraenetic focus of the passage that is most clearly visible in the traits of an elaborate *chreia*. This duality comes together in Jesus' becoming an example to the disciples in times of temptation and trial.[125]

The text portrays Jesus at a critical moment in his life and ministry and thus calls for a biographical perspective focusing on Jesus and his destiny. This perspective is seen most clearly in the narrative parts of the story, which together

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123 Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 976–77 says that the Gethsemane scene draws not only on the Lord's Prayer but also from memories of his prayer life more generally. Hägerland, *Jesus*, 246–47 mentions Lucian's *Demonax* as an example of how anecdotes and biography are not mutually exclusive.

124 Eric Thurman, "Looking for a Few Good Men: Mark and Masculinity" in *New Testament Masculinities* (ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson; Semeia Studies 45; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 151.

125 Previous research took this duality to indicate different sources, about which recent research is more doubtful about. See for example Jörg Frey, "Leidenskampf und Himmelsreise: Das Berliner Evangelienfragment (Papyrus Berolinensis 22220) und die Gethsemane-Tradition," *BZ* 46 (2002): 86–87; Collins, *Mark*, 675.

make up one continuous plot whereby Jesus becomes increasingly alone. He faces his destiny in solitude, symbolized by the disciples who fall asleep in the midst of his crisis and, ultimately, God's silence to his prayer. The obvious links to Mark 13 turn Jesus' personal crisis into an eschatological and apocalyptic crisis about God's appointed "hour."

The dicta make sense of the crisis. Jesus tumbled down on the ground as a result of distress. His turmoil was voiced in a citation from the biblical tradition of the righteous sufferer, a tradition that bridges distress and piety, since it is precisely in such situations that the righteous sufferer entrusts himself to God and awaits his help. Thus the biblical lament makes sense of Jesus' distress in a way that also paves the way for considering him pious, addressing his heavenly Father in prayer. This prayer voices a hope that God will find a way out of the prospect of death for him, but also submits to his Father's will, as the Lord's Prayer does.

Mark's Gospel portrays Jesus as a man of faith, trusting in God's omnipotence. He acts in a way analogous to the needy who approached him to find help, but he is denied what he gave them. The Gethsemane scene belongs together with other "cup"-texts in the Gospel, a fact which paves the way for an altruistic interpretation. This is affirmed through a narrative reading where the anomaly of this story is taken into account.

Stephen D. Moore says that this scene provides a display of manliness in "the heroic overcoming of the passions there explicitly thematized."[126] Jesus displays the supreme self-mastery characteristic of masculinity. With Colleen M. Conway, however, I find it questionable whether his submission, "even if it involves self-restraint, would be understood by a man in the Greco-Roman world as masculine deportment."[127] There is certainly nothing of hegemonic masculinity here; his fear and prayer for escape portrays instead an "emasculated victim," as Conway puts it. It is more important in my view that Mark's Gospel copes with the problem of an effeminate Jesus primarily through biblical traditions of the righteous sufferers who entrust themselves to God in times of distress. Through this lens, Jesus is not effeminate but a man of faith. Furthermore, the altruistic interpretation that Jesus faced this pain for the benefit of others opens new perspectives on how masculinity comes into play in this text.[128]

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126 Stephen D. Moore, "'O Man, Who Art Thou ...?': Masculinity Studies in New Testament Studies," in *New Testament Masculinities* (ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson; Semeia Studies 45; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 11.

127 Conway, *Behold the Man*, 101.

128 See Chapter 20.5.2 in the present study.

CHAPTER 6

# Matthew: "If Necessary"

Mark and Matthew may be taken together in how Jesus is portrayed in the garden; most Marcan perspectives are also present in Matthew (26:36–46). However, some significant differences do stand out. Whether they are genuine alterations or simply different versions is not of central concern here. Together, the differences tip the balance towards a slightly different picture that makes Matthew a witness of independent value in the discourse of the present study.

Matthew's narrative context and introduction (vv. 36–38) are very similar to Mark's, but the following distinctions merit inspection. In the first place, "with them" (μετ᾽ αὐτῶν v. 36) and "with me" (μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ v. 38 and 40) differ from Mark, likely for important reasons. Second, Matthew has Jesus speak of his "distress" (λυπεῖσθαι), which is not found in Mark, though it is related to the scriptural περίλυπός found in both gospels. A threefold structure is more apparent here, although the author never cites it as explicitly as does Mark:

| **vv. 36–38** | **vv. 42–43** | **vv. 44–46** |
|---|---|---|
| He went | He went | He went |
| He prayed | He prayed | He prayed |
| (actual prayer) | (second prayer rendered) | (not rendered) |
| He came | He came | He came |
| He found | He found | He found |
| He says | | He says |

As in Mark, the narrative is interspersed with sayings of Jesus, among which the double prayer (vv. 39b and 42) is the most significant. Matthew gives the prayer twice in the first person and there is a difference between the two instances in Matthew. This is often overlooked by commentators on this passage, probably due to the fact that Matthew uses narrative to convey the picture that the three prayers are identical: "... and prayed for the third time, saying the same word" (v. 44). However, they are *not* identical and the differences go beyond mere changes of style.

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## 6.1 Jesus and His Disciples

While Mark in the plural ἔρχονται implies that Jesus arrived the garden with his disciples, Matthew says that *he* arrived "with them" (μετ᾽ αὐτῶν, Matt 26:36). This observation gains significance when we note that such prepositional phrases are repeated twice in addition to the opening sentence: "… remain here, and stay awake with me (μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ, v. 38) and "So, could you not stay awake with me (μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ) one hour?" (v. 40).[1] The relationship between Jesus and his disciples thus comes into focus in a way not found in Mark. By implication, Matthew's version links up with the previous discussion on the disciples' failure (Matt 26:32–35) more directly than Mark's does. On a narrative level, there is a contrast between the disciples' abandoning Jesus at Gethsemane and the name given to Jesus 1:23 (μεθ᾽ ἡμῶν ὁ θεός), and his closing promise of being "with them" (ἐγὼ μεθ᾽ ὑμῶν εἰμι) to the end of the ages (28:20). The disciples failed to be to Jesus what he is and will remain to them. The Gethsemane episode is thus caught up within a central theme that forms an *inclusio* to the entire story.

We observed in Mark that the disciples' change of bodily position from sitting to sleeping becomes a metaphor within a setting of temptation; the "falling asleep" becomes figurative in the admonition Jesus gives there. Matthew's use of "with me" so close to their falling asleep slightly alters this trope. Their solidarity with Jesus is in focus and Jesus finds that they fail him. While this makes the figurative level in the text less apparent in Matthew, he clearly includes it in verse 41: "Stay awake and pray that you may not come into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." The reader is less prepared for this statement here than when it appears in Mark's Gospel, so the change from sitting to sleeping in Matthew is less significant than in Mark. Apart from verse 42, therefore, Matthew's version reads more like a narrative from Jesus' ministry, while Mark appears more bent on establishing the relevance of this story or at least offers a text that is more conducive to that interpretation.

## 6.2 Less Troubled?

W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr. suggest that Matthew in having λυπεῖσθαι (v. 37b) instead of the ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι found in Mark weakens the emotional

1 Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 393 points out that this is found in Matthew alone.

aspect: "Did Matthew think it too strong?"[2] Similarly, Jung-Sik Cha notes that Matthew tones down the excessive fluctuation of Jesus' emotions here.[3] Distress is directly involved in three places: in the narrative of verse 37b (one of Mark's key terms is replaced); Jesus' citation of scripture in verse 37 (identical with Mark); and finally in Jesus falling on his face rather than to the ground.

Since the scriptural citation is identical with Mark's Gospel, it can hardly help in evaluating the variations. Davies and Allison imply that λυπεῖσθαι is less emotional, but I hesitate to endorse that view. First, λυπεῖσθαι is already implied in περίλυπός, which is found in both gospels. Furthermore, with regard to emotions, λυπεῖσθαι appears less extreme, but that particular verb is the cognate of the noun λύπη ("passion"), a cardinal vice in Greek moral philosophy.[4] Although that perspective may well have been outside Matthew's scope, his text—having cognates of λύπη twice—strengthens an aspect that came in for criticism, especially from outsiders.

"Falling on the face" is somewhat ambivalent, but seems, in accordance with biblical tradition,[5] to be primarily about awe and honor. At several points, the First Gospel adds the dimension of awe and sometimes worship to texts left more open in this regard by Mark, as shown by the following examples:[6]

Mark 1:40 παρακαλῶν αὐτὸν [καὶ γονυπετῶν]
Matt 8:2 προσελθὼν προσεκύνει αὐτῷ

Mark 5:22 πίπτει πρὸς τοὺς πόδας
Matt 9:18 ἐλθὼν προσεκύνει αὐτῷ

Mark 7:25 προσέπεσεν πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ
Matt 15:25 προσεκύνει αὐτῷ

2 W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew Volume 3: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 495; see also W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew Volume 1: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 104–105; Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 396; Craig A. Evans, *Matthew* (New Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambrigde University Press, 2012), 434.

3 Cha, "Confronting Death," 229.

4 See Chapter 4.9 and 5.2.1 of the present study.

5 Davies and Allison, Jr., *Saint Matthew Volume 3*, 496. This biblical expression is also attested other places in the New Testament (Luke 5:12; 17:6; 1 Cor 14:25; Rev 7:11; 11:16).

6 Since NRSV is rather free in the translations here, I provide the relevant Greek text.

| | |
|---|---|
| Mark 6:51–52 | And they were utterly astounded (ἐξίσταντο), for they did not understand . . . |
| Matt 14:33 | And those in the boat worshiped him (προσεκύνησαν), saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.' |

In this Matthean procedure, Jesus at Gethsemane becomes a figure offering homage and respect at precisely the point where Mark's Jesus tumbles. Although verses 37–38 announce agony, a shift of emphasis emerges. The prayer in verse 39 is introduced in a way that recalls texts like Matt 2:11 and 17:6, where falling on the face, paying homage, and feeling fear are all intertwined. This may well be a development of the righteous sufferer's entrusting himself to God precisely in times of trials. Matthew has shifted the emphasis from simultaneous agony and prayer to just the prayer element. Since the question of Jesus' distress finds further elaboration in the way Matthew casts his prayer, it is necessary to take that into account before answering the question that Davies and Allison pose.

## 6.3 Jesus at Prayer: Subordinating the Cup Prayer

In the Second Gospel, the contrastive ἀλλὰ serves to pinpoint how the two parts of the prayer are related. Matthew pushes this question further. Except in verse 44, the prayer is not summarized in narration, but instead is rendered twice. Mark renders the prayer only once but includes it in his narrative as a kind of summary in the third person. Comparing the actual prayers of Jesus in Mark and Matthew will highlight idiosyncrasies in Matthew.

| **Mark 14:35 (narrative prayer)** | **Mark 14:36 (actual prayer)** | **Matt 26:39 (actual prayer)** | **Matt 26:42 (actual repeated prayer)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| And going a little farther, | | And going a little farther, | Again he went away for the second time |
| he threw himself on the ground | | he threw himself on his face | |
| and prayed | He said, | and prayed, | |
| | | | and prayed, |
| that, | "Abba, Father, | "My Father, | |
| | | | "My Father, |

TABLE (*cont.*)

| **Mark 14:35 (narrative prayer)** | **Mark 14:36 (actual prayer)** | **Matt 26:39 (actual prayer)** | **Matt 26:42 (actual repeated prayer)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| if it were possible, | For you all things are possible; | if it is possible, | if this cannot pass |
| the hour might pass | remove this cup | let this cup pass | unless I drink it |
| from him. | from me; | from me; | |
| | yet, not what I want, but what you want" | yet, not what I want but what you want." | your will be done." |

| **Mark 14:35 (narrative prayer)** | **Mark 14:36 (actual prayer)** | **Matt 26:39 (actual prayer)** | **Matt 26:42 (actual repeated prayer)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| καὶ προελθὼν μικὸν | | καὶ προελθὼν μικὸν | πάλιν ἐκ δευτέρου ἀπελθὼν |
| ἔπιπτεν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς | | ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον αυτοῦ | |
| | καὶ ἔλεγεν | | |
| καὶ προσηύχετο | | προσευχόμενος καὶ λέγων | προσηύξατο λέγων |
| | αββα ὁ πατήρ | πάτερ μου | πάτερ μου |
| ἵνα | | | |
| εἰ δυνατόν ἐστιν | πάντα δδυνατά σοι | εἰ δυνατόν ἐστιν | εἰ οὐ δύναται τοῦτο |
| παρέλθη ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ | παρένεγκε τὸ ποτήριον τοῦτο ἀπ᾽ ἐμοῦ | παρελθάτω ἀπ᾽ ἐμοῦ | παρελθεῖν |
| ἡ ὥρα | | τὸ ποτήριον τοῦτο | ἐαν μὴ αὐτὸ πίω |

| **Mark 14:35 (narrative prayer)** | **Mark 14:36 (actual prayer)** | **Matt 26:39 (actual prayer)** | **Mat 26:42 (actual repeated prayer)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ἀλλ' οὐ τί ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλὰ τί σύ | πλὴν οὐχ ὡς ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλ' ὡς σύ | γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου |

Fundamentally, these texts convey related pictures of Jesus' prayer. God is addressed as Father. Since Mark's indirect prayer for obvious reasons cannot sustain a vocative, it forms an exception. All the prayers raise the issue of God's power to alter the situation in which Jesus finds himself. In Mark's prayer this is not part of a conditional sentence, but a statement about God's nature: "For you all things are possible." The request to have death pass from him is the heart of all the verses. The idea of "drinking a cup" (Matt 20:22) is voiced in all the actual prayers, while Mark's narrative report has "hour" here.

Matthew's second prayer is phrased differently (see below). Finally, with the exception of Mark's indirect prayer, all the instances emphasize Jesus' submission and obedience to his Father's will. In all instances, Jesus breaks off or interrupts his own prayer by referring to his Father's will, emphasizing that Jesus is the obedient Son; in fact, his agony serves to underline his devotion. Even in the moment of his distress he embraced the will of his Father. The fact that his own will ran contrary to that will only confirms obedience. There is not the slightest hint that Jesus acts in a way that is improper or should cause anyone to take exception to his behavior; the portrayal is entirely positive. In Mark, the tradition of the righteous sufferer made it possible to hold together anguish and submissiveness. This is present in Matthew's scriptural citation as well, but is overshadowed by the portrayal of a submissive Son, thus asking us to address the implications of Matthew's different shaping of the second prayer in this passage.

### 6.3.1 *God's Will Up Front*

I am uneasy with the way most commentaries deal with verse 42. According to Davies and Allison, it "does not represent any advance over Mt 26:39."[7] This conclusion is not surprising due to Matt 26:44's phrasing of "... saying the

7 Davies and Allison, *Matthew Volume 3*, 500.

same words." Nonetheless, there are two reasons for claiming that the logic of verse 42 is somewhat different than verse 39. In the first place, παρέρχομαι is used without a prepositional phrase, while in verse 39 ἀπ᾽ ἐμοῦ is found. In addition, the reference to τοῦτο hangs in the balance here. It is probably due to a similar uneasiness that some manuscripts have added τὸ ποτήριον here, thus bringing the two prayers into line with each other.

The logic of verse 42 is made up of two elements: "If this cannot pass unless I drink it . . . " If τοῦτο is taken to the cup itself, there is redundancy here: how can drinking the cup serve to have the same cup pass from him? It would have made more sense to find "hour,"[8] but that is a feminine noun and is thus impossible here. The reference of τοῦτο is therefore more likely a *constructio ad sensum*,[9] referring to God's plan. Since "drinking the cup" is so intimately connected with the completion of this plan, τοῦτο remains here in spite of the incongruences involved. The dictionaries give different options for παρέρχομαι. When followed by a prepositional phrase it means "pass by without touching," as it does in Matt 26:39. BAGD s.v. notes that in Matt 26:42 the verb is used absolutely. The absolute form may refer to something that is brought to naught or disappears (Matt 24:34–35) or simply the passing of an event, as is appropriate here.[10] Such a translation makes the necessary distinctions between the two parts of the prayer in verse 42 and makes sense of how they relate. This means that the first part of the prayer refers to God's plan (cf. Matt 3:15, "to fulfil all righteousness"), which cannot occur without Jesus' emptying the cup.

In terms of the implications of this conclusion, R.T. France notes: "The second prayer is not simply a repeat of the first. It suggests that Jesus now knows the answer to his request of verse 39, and has accepted that no alternative is possible. In that case there is only one course for Jesus to take: 'Let your will be done'."[11] France has offered a most important insight. Jesus' dictum "if it is possible" in verse 39 is connected to his concern that the cup may pass from him. However, in verse 42 the verb δύνασθαι does not refer to the wish but instead to the accomplishment of God's will; hence, if God's will cannot be accomplished unless Jesus drinks the cup, he is willing to do so. The connection between the divine plan and drinking the cup is strengthened.

8 That is the case in Matt 14:15: ἡ ὥρα ἤδη παρῆλθεν.

9 Friedrich Blass, Albert Debrunner, and Friedrich Rehkopf, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*. 14.; Völlig neubearbeitete und erweiterte Auflage (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), §134.

10 BAGD s.v.: LSJ s.v.

11 R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (The New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 1006.

The conditional εἰ points to God's will or plan and is thus foregrounded in a way different from Mark, although the will of the Father is clearly present there as well.[12] In Matthew, God's will becomes more dominant.[13] If God's plan is dependent upon Jesus' drinking the cup, he will do it. However, Matthew includes God's omnipotence in the dialogue (Matt 26:53–54) immediately after the Gethsemane scene, when one of his disciples strikes the ear of a high priest's servant: "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled which says it must (δεῖ) happen in this way?" God's omnipotence comes into play not as motivating Jesus' cup prayer, but to emphasize the superiority of God's will. This passage indicates that Matthew does not envisage Jesus in Gethsemane as really praying for his escape, since the cup prayer jeopardizes that outlook.

The primary concern throughout the passion is the fulfillment of Scripture, or God's will to put it otherwise. This is revealing as to how the cup prayer is subordinated here and makes it understandable that Mark has no such theological comment by Jesus in his Passion Narrative. Actually, Matt 26:53–54 has more in common with John 12:27 ("Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour?' No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour," see below)[14] and his refusal to call upon angelic help (cf. Matt 4:5–7) than with the actual cup prayer. Furthermore, this exegesis finds substantiation in a change that occurs in the first prayer.

### 6.3.2 *From ἀλλά to πλὴν*

In Mark 14:36, the cup prayer is followed by an ἀλλά- sentence, indicating that Jesus, in the midst of his hope to be rescued, submitted to his Father's will: "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; *yet*, not what I want, but what you want." In Matthew, the cup prayer is followed by the same submissiveness, but ἀλλά is replaced by πλὴν. Does that make any difference? The conjunction πλὴν may simply be used adversatively, as with ἀλλά. However, according to BAGD *s.v.* and LSJ *s.v.*, it often breaks off a discussion and introduces what really matters in a summary statement. Two important studies on this conjunction agree that πλὴν is less adversative and more

12 Thus also Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (WBC 33B; Dalles Tex.: Word Books, 1995), 783.

13 Thus also Matthias Konradt, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (NTD; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Riprecht, 2015), 411–12.

14 Similarly, John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2005), 1114.

progressive,[15] introducing that which is of utmost importance. This finds substantiation in many New Testament texts. In Luke 9:34–35, πλὴν introduces a dictum aimed at summarizing the most important: "… but (πλὴν) love your enemies … "[16] Luke 12:30–31 has: "For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead (πλὴν), strive (ζητεῖτε) for his kingdom …," while Matthew's ζητεῖτε δὲ πρῶτον (6:33) brings out very clearly how πλὴν functions. Here we see that although πλὴν has adversative elements, it is primarily progressive, introducing what is *really* important or summarizing what is *truly* at stake. The first part of the sentence thus receives a subordinate role vis-a-vis what πλὴν introduces. If we turn to Matthew's Gospel, πλὴν is not used as often, but in 18:7 it has precisely this meaning: "Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but (πλὴν) woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes!" Margaret E. Thrall suggests the meaning "and, what is more" or "moreover" in such cases.

Applied to the prayer in Matt 26:39, this means that πλὴν introduces the peak of the prayer; even more significant is that it serves to give to the cup prayer a more emphatic subordinate role than in Mark. Margaret E. Thrall thus rightly notes that πλὴν in Matt 26:39 comes to work conditionally: "If it is possible, let me escape suffering, *on the condition that* the will of God may still be accomplished."[17] A conditional reading shifts the emphasis from what happens to Jesus to the accomplishment of God's will. Surely, this is not totally foreign to Mark, but it still comes out differently and much more strongly in Matthew. The conditional aspect serves to tone down Jesus' concern about himself as it appears in Mark's Gospel: "On this interpretation the two attitudes of mind are completely integrated, with the one subordinated to the other. There is no real conflict at all. … the impression produced by the Marcan saying is considerably modified."[18]

It is, of course no accident that Luke also has the same πλὴν in his cup prayer (Luke 22:41), in a context where the agonizing Jesus (at least in the shorter version) is toned down (see Chapter 7). According to Thrall, ἀλλά in Mark gives the impression of a severe mental conflict. Jesus acknowledges God's will, even

15 Margaret E. Thrall, *Greek Participles in the New Testament: Linguistic and Exegetical Studies* (NTTS 3; Leiden: Brill, 1962), 20–24, 67–70; Wolfgang Schenck, *Die Sprache des Matthäus: Die Text-Konstituenten in ihren makro- und mikrostrukturellen Relationen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 411–12.

16 Thus also in Luke 10:11; 11:41, and 23:28. See also 1 Cor 11:11 and Eph 5:33.

17 Thrall, *Greek Participles*, 69. Schenk suggests "vor allem."

18 Thrall, *Greek Participles*, 69.

though it militates against his own will: "It is necessary to consider the possibility that the use of πλὴν by the other two Evangelists is intended to modify the impression of conflict which is produced by the Marcan version."[19] The subordination of the cup prayer fits well with how Matthew portrays Jesus at prayer; grief, though not entirely absent, gives way to piety and submissiveness to the divine will. The change from ἀλλά to πλὴν thus paves the way for the altered construction found in the prayer in verse 42.

There is more complexity to Matthew's rendering of the prayer than verse 44 on its own allows. The two changes both push the Gethsemane story in a new direction compared to Mark. The emphasis has shifted from the cup prayer to the concern for the accomplishment of God's will.[20] Thrall therefore rightly paraphrases: "let me escape suffering, on condition that the will of God allows me to do so," or "I am willing to suffer if the purpose of God requires it of me."[21] Thus πλὴν introduces the resolution to the conflict implied in the first part of the prayer. As Thrall puts it: "... Matthew will have modified his source by representing as already resolved a conflict which in Mark is acutely present and immediate."[22]

Mark's "for you all things are possible" (14:36) shifts tone in Matthew. While in Mark this is a saying about God's unlimited *power*, in Matthew it becomes a statement of the determination of his *plan*, which cannot be interfered with (εἰ δυνατόν ἐστιν). This difference may be exaggerated, since even in Mark it is implied that verse 35 and verse 36 work synonymously, hence modifying "for you all things are possible" into a statement of God's plan. Nevertheless, according to Mark the direct prayer is mentioned only once (v. 36), and there it is about the unlimited power of God to which Jesus directs his hope for escape. The difference between Mark and Matthew therefore implies a shift of emphasis where the agony or distress becomes more tempered and the submission enhanced.

19 Thrall, *Greek Participles*, 68.

20 As for verse 39, Codex C has a reading, though in the margin, that adds Luke 22:43–44 at the end of the verse, which is also found in the minuscule family f13. This is likely an attempt at harmonizing versions in circulation and bears witness to the fact that the longer Lukan version came to be seen as the Gethsemane scene par excellence.

21 Thrall, *Greek Participles*, 70.

22 Thrall, *Greek Participles*, 70.

## 6.4 Praying the Lord's Prayer

Matthew confirms and strengthens what we also observed in Mark, that the Lord's Prayer is a subtext to the garden prayer.[23] By using the more simple "My Father," he echoes the vocative or address in the Lord's Prayer found in his own Gospel. Matthew 26:42 makes an explicit link to the Pater Noster with γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, which is identical to Matt 6:10b. Jesus now *acts* out this prayer that he had taught his disciples. In that light it is worth contemplating why his own instruction in Matt 6:6 and 7:7–11 on God's responding to prayers finds no application for himself. In Gethsemane, he is exempted from the instruction into which Matthew has placed the Lord's Prayer. Surely, God will give "good things" (ἀγαθὰ) to those who ask him, but *not* to Jesus praying at Gethsemane. The way God's will has become dominant in Matthew's rendering of Gethsemane makes it evident that Matt 7:11 about "good things" does not apply to Jesus himself, since the benefits that he brings *to others* are conditioned by his emptying the cup (Matt 20:22–28), a reasoning with resemblances to Mark's paradoxical Gethsemane theology.

Furthermore, the admonition to the disciples (v. 41, ἵνα μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς πειρασμόν) also brings the Lord's Prayer more clearly into play than in Mark.[24] Wiard Popkes has demonstrated that the appearance of the Lord's Prayer implies that the scene is cast as a temptation and gives Jesus a paradigmatic function; this is how disciples pray and act during temptation.[25] I have pointed out that the reminiscences of the *chreia* form in Mark 14 bear witness to the same focus there. Although Matthew weakens the figurative use of sleeping (see above), temptation nonetheless becomes more evident in his Gospel. The admonition not to come into temptation is phrased along the lines of the Lord's Prayer. Furthermore, Matthew embarks upon the ministry of Jesus by discussing temptation, making this the opening scene of his ministry and thus elevating temptation in importance for the reader.[26]

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23 Thus also Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 394; Marlis Gielen, "'Und führe uns nicht in Versuchung': Die 6. Vater-Unser Bitte: Eine Anfechtung für das biblische Gottesbild?" *ZNW* 89 (1998): 211–12.

24 Although Matthew's εἰσέρχεσθαι is closer to the εἰσφέρειν found in Matt 6:10b than Mark's ἔρχεσθαι, it is worth reminding ourselves that even within a text so firmly established in the tradition, the Lord's Prayer circulated in several versions.

25 Wiard Popkes, "Die letzte Bitte des Vater-Unser: Formgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zum Gebet Jesu," *ZNW* 81 (1990): 11–17.

26 James L. Mays, "'Now I Know': An Exposition of Genesis 22:1–19 and Matthew 26:36–46," *ThTo* 58 (2002) 519–25 searches for a biblical pattern which he finds in the testing of Abraham, not unlike what we observed as a possible if implicit link in Mark 14.

## 6.5 Summing Up

Although Matthew's version does not really militate against what is already present in Mark, a careful turning of the tables comes into view. The shift becomes visible at three specific points. First, Jesus falls on his face, a bodily posture more conducive to piety than to despair. Second, the Lord's Prayer comes through more clearly as a subtext, implying that the role of the cup prayer becomes vague as it is emphatically subordinated to Jesus submitting to his Father's will. The cup prayer is carefully intertwined with the submission motif. Although both verse 39 and verse 42 are altered to fit each other, the latter most clearly foregrounds obedience in a way that goes beyond Mark's Gospel. Third, the temptation motif is strengthened. Jesus faces a temptation that he defies by submitting to his Father's will. Hence, the text can be summarized as being about "your will be done." By no means does Matthew deny that Jesus was deeply affected by the prospect of his death, but "his course is fixed by the will of God, and this overrides whatever beliefs or feelings he has about death, so there is no real resistance. For Jesus the issue is not death but submission to the divine will: 'Thy will be done.' "[27] It is not clear that Matthew has weakened the emotional aspect; instead, it is a matter of shifting the emphasis to Jesus' piety. Most importantly, the cup prayer is tamed by being intertwined more intimately with the submission. The idea of a prayer easily divisible into the two parts of cup and will is about to break down in Matthew.

27 Davies and Allison, Jr., *Matthew Volume 3*, 502.

CHAPTER 7

# A Heroic Jesus? Luke's Gospel (Luke 22:39–46)

## 7.1 Introductory Remarks

Luke's version is certainly the most dramatic and has attracted the most attention among scholars and believers in general. This version has become the Gethsemane scene par excellence, a fact due especially to the physical description of the agony found in verses 43–44. The recent interest in the Lukan version among scholars takes as its point of departure Jerome H. Neyrey's groundbreaking study "The Absence of Jesus' Emotions: The Lucan Redaction of Lk 22,39–46" (1980).[1] The crucial matter is the textual conundrum involved with the question of the authenticity of verses 43–44, precisely the verses that have proven so decisive and productive in portraying Jesus at prayer in Gethsemane. In the present study, the authenticity question is not of primary interest, though I find the arguments against reading verses 43–44 as authentic more convincing. The longer version enjoys very early attestation[2] that in any case makes it a key witness to the early discourse on Jesus at prayer in the garden. This discourse now emerges in the transmission of Luke's text. My interpretation is therefore twofold, starting with the shorter version Luke 22:39–42, 45–46 moving to the longer version by including verses 43–44. While the shorter version is to be treated separately, the longer version is seen in continuity with the shorter.

1 See also his *The Passion According to Luke: A Redaction Study of Luke's Soteriology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985). His contribution set the agenda for the works of Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, Greg Sterling, *Mors Philosophi*, Peter J. Scaer, *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death*, and Claire Clivaz, *L'ange et la sueur de sang*.

2 Justin Martyr *Dial*. 103.7–9; Irenaeus, *Haer*. 4.35.3 (SC 100:871) and Hippolytus, *Noet*. 18.2. The texts of Justin and Hippolytus are treated below. In his refutation of Pelagians, Jerome refers to Luke 22:43 (*Pelag*. 2.16.19; CCSL 80:75), saying that this verse is found in some copies, Greek as well as Latin, thus indicating his familiarity with the question of their reliability. Hilary of Poitiers is likewise familiar with the issue, saying that the relevant verses in Luke are not found in Mark and Matthew (*De Trinitate* 10.40–41; CCSL 62A:493–95). Hilary uses this passage against heretics and hence would certainly have preferred that its authenticity were unquestioned. Nonetheless, he admits that there is doubt, since it is missing in many Greek and Latin manuscripts (*De Trinitate* 10.41;). Since this may be seen to undermine his point, his inclusion of it bears witness to a widespread awareness of the questionable status of these Lukan verses.

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## 7.2 Textual Criticism: Window to a Gethsemane Discourse

Bart D. Ehrman and M.A. Plunkett's article "The Angel and the Agony: The Textual Problem of Luke 22:43–44" (1983) furthered the debate on the authenticity of verses 43–44.[3] The evidence for omitting verses 43–44 is substantial and has led the Nestle-Aland's 28th edition to put these verses in double brackets, thus advising that "they are known not to be part of the original text."[4] Nonetheless, the external evidence is so divided that scholars continue to disagree on this point.[5] The longer version finds support in, for example, Sinaiticus first hand, D, K, L, X, Δ (first hand), Θ, Π (first hand), Ψ, f1, many minuscules, several lectionaries, and many of the church fathers. The verses in question are omitted by P75, apparently P69, Sinaiticus *post corr*, Vaticanus and Alexandrinus, N, T, W, the minuscules 579, 1071, numerous lectionaries and translations, and several church fathers. The division of the evidence is simply overwhelming.

### 7.2.1 *Added?*

Doctrinal reasons may have motivated both inclusion and exclusion of these verses; either option is plausible.[6] The text may have been added to counter what many scholars hold to be the emotionless Jesus in this passage (see below). Bart D. Ehrman reiterates his position in an article in *A Journal of Textual Criticism* published 2000.[7] He says that Jesus in Luke "never appears to become disturbed at all, in any way;" the only exception is Luke 22:43–44, verses that are therefore secondary. In this way the verses in question combat antidocetic tendencies. Jesus appears as utterly human, which refutes tendencies to remove Jesus from physical human needs and emotions, a tendency

3 See also Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 187–94.

4 Nestle-Aland 28th edition, p. 55*.

5 For the textual basis of the versions and different views held among scholars, see Darrell Bock, *Luke. Volume 2: 9:51–24:53* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1996), 1763–64; François Bovon, *Luke 3: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luk 19:28–24:53* (Hermeneia: A Critical & Historical Commentary on the Bible. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 197–99; Ilaria Ramelli, "ΚΟΙΜΩΜΕΝΟΥΣ ΑΠΟ ΤΗΣ ΛΥΠΗΣ (Lk 22,45): A Deliberate Change," *ZNW* 102 (2011): 62 (note 12).

6 Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1975), 177 holds it unlikely that they were deleted.

7 Bart D. Ehrman, "Text and Interpretation: The Exegetical Significance of the 'Original' Text," TC: *A Journal of Textual Criticism* 5 (2000) §32; http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/vol05/Ehrman2000a.html.

visible in the shorter version. No doubt, later sources draw on this passage in order to refute anything they consider heretical.[8] The question of Christ's humanity is not really voiced in the text, though it *may* be implied; it is nevertheless not at all surprising that the issue of Jesus' humanity became crucial in the history of interpreting these verses.

### 7.2.2 *Deleted?*

These verses may also have been deleted due to the fact that Jesus is assisted by an angel, to whom he is supposed to be superior (Col 1:18; 2:15, 18; Heb 1–2).[9] We have seen that Julian the Emperor found the assisting angel to militate against the divinity of Jesus.[10] Much also depends on how verses 43–44 are interpreted, whether as a climactic presentation of the anguished Jesus or a heroic athlete during combat. Neyrey takes the latter view and holds verses 43–44 to be authentic. Most recently, the authenticity of the relevant verses has found an advocate in Claire Clivaz, who argues that Luke 22:43–44 were omitted since the passage was conducive to gnostic-inspired Christology: "they became incapable of hearing these verses other than as an expression of their opponents' opinions."[11] The angelic intervention may have caused the deletion of this text, since that paved the way for Christology in gnostic manners. Clivaz suggests that P75 copied from an edition in which verses 43–44 were already omitted, arguing forcefully that Jesus is not emotionless in Luke's Gospel, and Luke 22:43–44 are thus not as exceptional as assumed by Bart D. Ehrman.[12] She holds that the inclusion of verses 43–44 is most likely correct.

The divided textual evidence actually serves as a window on the discourse unraveled in the present study. Textual criticism has traditionally aimed

8 Both Justin Martyr *Dial*. 103.8 and Irenaeus *Haer*. 3.22.2 refer to Luke 22:43–44 in passages directed against Docetists (see below).

9 Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 184 points out that Epiphanius (ca. 374 CE) in *Ancoratus* 31.4–5 (GCS 1:40.13–15) says that the orthodox omitted the text since it could easily be taken to support of Arian Christology, thus demonstrating that at this time Gethsemane was under dispute on doctrinal grounds and that the authenticity of Luke 22:43–44 was part of the debate.

10 See Chapter 4.5.2. This point is also made in a *scholion* to Luke 22:43–44: "that he who is adored and glorified with fear and trembling by all the celestial powers did not need the strengthening of the angel," quoted according to Joel B. Green, "Jesus on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39–46): Tradition and Theology," *JSNT* 26 (1986): 35.

11 Clivaz, *L'Ange et la sueur de sang*, 638. See also her "The Angel and the Sweat."

12 Claire Clivaz, "'A Sweat," (note 48) refers to Luke 19:41 (weeping), 23:46 (the cry on the cross), and 22:15 (ἐπιθυμίᾳ ἐπιθύμησα), keeping in mind that ἐπιθυμία was one of the passions rejected in Greek moral philosophy.

at reconstructing an actual or supposed original text. It is helpful to see the textual variants as windows into social history, ongoing theological disputes, and apologetics and the like in early Christianity.[13] In this case the text critical evidence is a reminder that Jesus' agony in the garden was under negotiation in the early Church. This is the primary perspective in this study. After having investigated the shorter version on an independent basis, I reach a conclusion that necessarily has some of the same uncertainties that attach to all serious work on verses 43–44. We now proceed to look at verses 39–42 + 45–46 (the shorter version).

## 7.3 The Shorter Version

### 7.3.1 *Temptation*

Jesus arrives at the Mount of Olives accompanied by his disciples. There is no mention of any disciples in particular, as occurs in Mark and Matthew; he is simply followed (ἀκολουθεῖν) by his disciples.[14] Luke casts Jesus as a teacher here and the lesson-text is about what discipleship entails (Luke 5:11, 28; 9:57–62; 18:28 cf. 9:23–24; 14:26). This comes into play immediately in verse 40 where Jesus instructs them explicitly. In Mark and Matthew, Jesus directs the disciples to sit while he is at prayer and to stay awake in support. No such admonition is found in Luke. The key difference is that the anxious Jesus—the explicit backdrop of the prayers in both Mark and Matthew—does not appear in Luke. From the immediate context regarding the swords, it might be inferred that Jesus is troubled, but this is not stated anywhere. Hence, no particular reason for the prayer in verse 42 is indicated and such reasons must be inferred from the nature of the prayer itself. The dictum "pray that you may not come into temptation (προσεύχεσθε μὴ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς πειρασμόν),"[15] which in Mark and Matthew is found when Jesus returns and finds them asleep, has been moved to the beginning in the Lukan passage. As a result of this move, the entire

13 See Bart D. Ehrman, "The Texts as a Window: New Testament Manuscripts and the Social History of Early Christianity," in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis 2nd edition* (ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes; New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents 42; London: Brill, 2013), 803–30.

14 For this motif, see the classical study of Martin Hengel, *Nachfolge und Charisma: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Studie zu Mt 8,21f und Jesu Ruf in die Nachfolge* (BZNW 34; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1968), 80–89.

15 NRSV here reads "into the time of trial." For the role of the Lord's Prayer here, see Chapters 5.5 and 6.4 in this study

passage becomes a lesson on how to face temptations. These observations are important, as they pave the way for a shift of emphasis from Jesus' agony to the issue of the disciples' being tempted, from biography to paradigm.

Several elements in the wider context enable this to happen. The importance of prayer in times of trial is emphasized in Luke 21:34–36. Likewise, in Luke 22:31–32, a text exclusive to him, Jesus addresses Peter by saying that he prayed for him as Satan made him his target. Furthermore, verse 46 mentions prayer in times of temptation, thus reiterating what verse 40 has already stated. The shorter version is thus enclosed within that topic.

Certainly, Jesus is not exempt from the perspective of temptation. According to Luke 4, Jesus embarked upon his ministry by facing Satan's temptations, with 4:13 reporting that he "departed from him until an opportune time (ἄχρι καιροῦ)." Gethsemane culminates this mission, as his words to his disciples imply: "You are those who have stood by me in my trials (ἐν τοῖς πειρασμοῖς μου)" (Luke 22:28).[16] From the observations noted here, it is necessary to ask what happened to the troubled Jesus in Luke.

### 7.3.2 *No Grief... but Emotionless?*

Immediately after the instruction to his disciples, Jesus in verse 41 returns to the picture, withdrawing from the disciples to pray. It is likely that ἀπεσπάσθη is emotionally motivated, though we lack any narrative information to buttress that interpretation. Acts 21:1, 6 where this verb occurs in the passive as in our passage, must be seen against the backdrop of a painful farewell involving emotions such as tears, hugging, and the pains involved in seeing a loved one for the last time.[17] However, that Jesus is emotionally disturbed finds some indirect support in the fact that he does kneel. Jesus' falling on his knees (θεὶς τὰ γόνατα) is an idiom used in Acts (7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5 cf. Luke 5:8), as a sign of submission and piety. However, François Bovon has pointed out that it applies particularly "in exceptional circumstances,"[18] thus implying some extreme situation where God's assistance is called upon. The passages in Luke and Acts where this idiom appears are just such cases; emotions run high and are often expressed in tears and loud voices. The transition scene between Acts 20 and Acts 21, characterized by falling on the knees with tears and sorrow, is notable in this respect.[19]

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16 Thus also Scaer, *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death*, 126–27.

17 Thus also Bock, *Luke*, 1758.

18 Bovon, *Luke 3*, 200.

19 *Pace* Scaer, *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death*, 97, who says that "instead of falling to the ground in prostration, the Lukan Jesus kneels in composed self-control

Although the view promoted by Neyrey and followed by many others—that Jesus in the Lukan version appears emotionless—rests on more solid foundations, the observations undertaken here cast some initial doubt on that interpretation. Neyrey's view is most naturally connected to the shorter version, but he also applies it to verses 43–44, which he interprets as Jesus victoriously combatting "passions" that are to be distinguished carefully from emotions in the modern sense. Two quotations illustrate his view. First, Neyrey posits that "Jesus is not a victim, out of control, subject to irrational passion; on the contrary, he is portrayed as practicing virtue, singleheartedly searching for God's will and being manfully obedient to God."[20] For Ehrman, meanwhile, "... Luke's Jesus never appears disturbed at all. He is imperturbable."[21] Both citations formulate precisely what has become a trend in Lukan studies of this incident. Even without including verses 43–44 and notwithstanding how the agony is to be interpreted (see below), this view simply does not come to sufficient terms with the Lukan portrayal of Jesus. Claire Clivaz has likewise questioned the Neyreyan view, arguing that Jesus in Luke 22:1–62 struggles with his desire (ἐπιθυμία), which is one of the cardinal passions.[22]

### 7.3.3 *Luke 12:49–50*

A passage like Luke 12:49–50 is worthy of consideration with regard to emotions in Luke: "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under (συνέχομαι) until it is completed." The Greek verb used here is a Lukan favorite, but scholars are divided on how precisely to render it. As in the NRSV text here, many scholars prefer "to be distressed," while others are reluctant to imply emotions and suggest "to be governed with" or "to be occupied with." John Nolland warns that scholars are seeing Gethsemane in the background here and thus offer "to be distressed."[23] Since no such connection can be firmly established, he prefers the other option, making Acts 18:5 about "Paul being occupied with proclaiming the word" a key reference.

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(22.41). Hence, Jesus' prayer posture is not dictated by his dire circumstances but by his customary piety."

20 Neyrey, "The Absence of Jesus' Emotions," 171.

21 Bart D. Ehrman, "Did Jesus Get Angry or Agonize? A Text Critic Pursues the Original Story," *Biblical Review* 21 (2005): 22.

22 Clivaz, *L'Ange et la sueur de sang*, 390–400, 630–33.

23 John Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34* (WBC 35B; Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 709. Thus also Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1985), 997.

By narrowing the question down to whether Luke 12:50 is a hidden Gethsemane passage or not, Nolland begs the question. The text refers to the ministry of Jesus more generally, which does not necessarily mean that no distress is involved. In the first place, Acts 18:5 should not be isolated from the immediate context of Paul's "occupation" leading immediately to opposition and Paul's being reviled. Certainly, more than "being occupied with" is involved. Furthermore, elsewhere in Luke and Acts συνέχομαι always involves some kind of force or constraint,[24] whether sickness (Luke 4:38; Acts 28:8), great fear (Luke 8:37), enemies (Luke 19:43), a crowd (Luke 8:45), crying with a loud voice (Acts 7:57), or mocking and beating (Luke 22:63). To be sure, the verb may be used with subtly different meanings, but distress is involved in all instances. According to Stephen Voorwinde's recent study on Jesus' emotions in the gospels, "the emotional overtones of the expression cannot be overlooked."[25] Hence, Luke 12:50 is a relevant text here not because it is a Gethsemane reference, which is debatable, but because it portrays Jesus in distress.

Jesus in Luke does not suffer from grief, which is reserved for the disciples (see below); that fact itself speaks volumes. Nonetheless, this does not leave Jesus entirely emotionless. Within Luke 22, even if verses 43–44 are left out, Jesus' emotions are important, as Claire Clivaz states: "The reformulation of Jesus' ἐπιθυμία between 22.15 and 22.42 shows that he evolves from the desire to be with his disciples to a concern for the Father's will."[26]

What has been said here about emotions paves the way for a renewed look at the legacy of noble death and Jesus at Gethsemane. As seen earlier in the present study, dying nobly is made up of some important ideals: courage, staying calm and unaffected, silence, and consistency in life between the critical moment of facing death and earlier life and between words and performance. Our exegesis has already touched upon this, since what is said above disturbs the ideal of facing death in a calm and unaffected manner. This brings us to verse 42, where one-sided heroic interpretations merit challenge.

### 7.3.4 *Cup Prayer with a Twist* (*Luke 22:42a*)

Neyrey paved the way for new perspectives on Jesus in Gethsemane and has stimulated much research. He argues that the garden scene culminates the temptation scene in Luke 4:1–13, with verse 13 forming a bridge between the

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24 BAGD s.v.; LSJ s.v.

25 Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels* (London: Continuum, 2011), 134. For a discussion on emotions in Luke's Gospel more generally, see pp. 119–48.

26 Clivaz, *L'ange et la sueur de sang*, 630.

two (see above).[27] Jesus is faced with temptation, which he victoriously fights in verses 43–44, the authenticity of which Neyrey upholds. Thus Jesus' response to the devil in 4:8 finds fulfillment in his embracing of the divine will in 22:42b: "yet, not my will be done but yours."[28] He shows himself victorious in the eschatological combat with the devil. There is much to commend in Neyrey's reading, but he fails to account for verse 42a, the cup prayer, which is difficult to fit into his interpretation. It is striking how evasively Neyrey addresses this particular verse: "'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me ...' Admittedly, this verse implies that Jesus prays to escape something,"[29] but his exegesis is unaffected by this insight. Neyrey turns immediately to verse 42b "..., yet, not my will but yours be done," which is about obedience and embracing God's will. He goes on to say: "As the story unfolds Jesus will *not*, in fact, have the 'cup removed,' nor will he avoid 'my temptation' (22:28). He will obediently and faithfully undergo an experience which at first glance he prayed to escape."[30] Verse 42a is thus nothing less than the beginning of the experience of what the "cup" implies. Gethsemane is swallowed up in Golgotha and the cup part of the prayer in verse 42a becomes devoid of reference.

Certainly, the cup prayer is altered, and significantly so. J. Warren Holleran has pointed out how Luke, unlike the other two Synoptic Gospels, distinguishes between βούλεσθαι and θέλειν in the prayer,[31] having the first refer to the Father and the second to Jesus. Although the verb βούλεσθαι is not especially significant in Luke's writings, the cognate noun (βουλή) does carry real weight (Acts 2:23; 4:28; 13:36; 20:27).[32] In all these texts, the noun appears in a sermon laying out how Jesus Christ fits into God's plan of salvation through the history of

27 Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke*, 56–57, 177–79.

28 For the use of πλὴν here, see Chapter 6.3.2 in the present study.

29 Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke*, 60. Neyrey considers Jesus' prayer as analogous to the prayer not to enter into temptation (v. 40), paying no attention to the fact that this is what Jesus urges them to do, not an actual prayer of the disciples.

30 Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke*, 60.

31 Holleran, *The Synoptic Gethsemane*, 88–89. Although I follow Holleran here, I feel that Luke likely expected readers to infer τὸ θέλημα logically after τὸ σὸν in verse 42b; βουλή is for grammatical reasons here impossible, as it is a feminine noun. There is nothing to support the view that βούλεσθαι is divine will and θέλειν human will in this passage, although Holleran might be taken to imply that.

32 This is not so in all occurrences, however; see Acts 27:12. For the importance of this motif, see John T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts* (SNTSMS 76; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), who points out that Luke first presents "this distinctive theme in his Gospel" in Luke 7:30 in a way that finds correspondence especially in the speeches in Acts.

Israel, which forms the larger perspective upon Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane. Εἰ βούλει is given an emphatic role in the prayer, thus making Jesus entirely dependent upon his Father's plan. Jesus' prayer is primarily concerned about his Father's will. This makes his submission stand out much more strongly than in Mark; even compared to Matthew, Luke extends the prayer further in that direction.

There is another significant observation to note: in the first two gospels, Jesus appeals to what his Father is *able* to do (δύνασθαι), making reference to his power to accomplish everything and thus conveying that Jesus nurtures some hope of having the cup removed. In Luke's version the reference to God's power is replaced with God's *plan*. Luke follows in the wake of what we have already seen at work in Matthew. This has repercussions on how the prayer is perceived; it is no longer primarily about the prospects of dying, but about the role of his death within God's plan. This moves the perspective from Jesus himself to his role in God's plan.

Nonetheless, by describing the Father's plan (or will) and Jesus' desire with two different terms, Luke upholds the view that Jesus did ask for the cup to pass from him. Geir Otto Holmås summarizes the prayer in this way: "Praying to his Father, Jesus seeks a final clarification of the relation of suffering to the divine will."[33] This claim minimizes the fact that Jesus really does want the cup to be taken away. Referring to the fact that Jesus, according to Luke 22:20, brings out the full meaning of his death cannot put aside the fact that Jesus at Gethsemane still wrestles with this concern.[34]

Against this backdrop, I hesitate to see the Gethsemane scene as just another temptation scene in accordance with Luke 4, although Luke 4:13 has prepared us for it. There is a difference between these temptation scenes, as Jesus in Luke 4 is completely dismissive of the devil; Luke 22:42a does not follow that lead. Neyrey considers rendering πειρασμός as "test" rather than "temptation" here. In urging the correspondence between Luke 4 and 22, Neyrey problematizes his own presentation. In Luke 4:1–13 the devil entices Jesus with something he is likely to find attractive. No such thing appears in the garden according to Neyrey, but this is what his analogy between the two texts not only suggests but

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33 Geir Otto Holmås, *Prayer and Vindication in Luke-Acts: The Theme of Prayer within the Context of the Legitimating and Edifying Objective of the Lukan Narrative* (LNTS 433; London: T&T Clark, 2011), 106. I have benefitted from my colleague's reading and constructive criticism of a draft of the present chapter.

34 Similar objections apply to Mark and Matthew. Neither can the Johannine-sounding Luke 10:21–22, about the unity between Father and Son, with a parallel in Matt 11:25–27, be used to remove this aspect entirely from Luke's Gethsemane scene.

also ultimately requires.[35] The prayer in verse 42a instead represents precisely a way out that Jesus finds attractive and enticing, so he does ask to be spared, even though the prayer in Luke's version is employed in a theological emphasis that shifts the focus to submission.

Since Neyrey assumes authenticity for verses 43–44, one more comment pertaining to his overall interpretation from that perspective is pertinent. He writes: "Part of the reason for the description of the angel precisely as 'strengthening' Jesus may lie in Luke's desire to portray Jesus as *not* under the influence of 'grief' by showing him in strength, which 'grief' characteristically destroys."[36] Neyrey turns to the question of what this passage owes to cultural sensibilities, by which he reshapes it narrowly into a question of passions. According to Neyrey, Luke 22:43–44 "*confirm* Jesus as one not subject to passions. For the issue is not our modern 'emotions,' but the ancient view of 'passions'."[37] In my view, Neyrey misses the point that it is the prayer to escape the cup as such that ancient readers used as proof that Jesus was seized by his passions. Judged by the standards of Socrates and his legacy, any such prayer about saving oneself is precisely an expression of being subject to passions.[38] In spite of Luke's efforts to come to terms with the cup prayer in his Gospel, it still reverberates even in the shorter version.[39]

According to John S. Kloppenborg, Luke tailors Jesus' passion according to the ideal of how philosophers die nobly, with the Gethsemane scene contributing to this portrayal. Kloppenborg subscribes to Neyrey's view that Luke altered the scene to avoid depicting Jesus as facing an emotional breakdown in the garden: the alterations made are redactional and "each contributes to the image of Jesus meeting his death fearlessly, with composure, and evincing the same virtues for which he was known throughout his prior ministry."[40] Jesus' prayer in verse 42a escapes his notice, which is regrettable since that particular verse destabilizes his interpretation of Jesus in Gethsemane.

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35 Neyrey implies that death is at the center of the temptation in both texts.

36 Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke*, 63.

37 Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke*, 57.

38 See Chapter 2.1–2.2.3 in the present study.

39 Neyrey is, in my view, in the process of equating Luke and John, which they simply are not. In John, Jesus never asks to be spared, so such a request would appear to be a sham, while Jesus in Luke still does just that; see also Christopher M. Tuckett, "Luke 22, 43–44: The 'Agony' in the Garden and Luke's Gospel," in *New Testament Textual Criticism and Exegesis: Festschrift J. Delobel* (ed. A. Denaux; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 137–38.

40 John S. Kloppenborg, "*Exitus Clari Viri*: The Death of Jesus in Luke," *TJT* 8 (1992): 113.

Similarly, Greg Sterling reads Luke's version as an attempt to respond to someone who "might react as Celsus later did ... he replaced what he feared some might consider a sign of physical collapse with a picture of piety."[41] The only exception to this pattern are verses 43–44. Sterling's decisive argument against the authenticity of these verses is, therefore, that they run counter to the pattern of heroic death. Peter J. Scaer argues that Luke's Passion Narrative portrays Jesus in accordance with ideals characteristic of both noble death and martyrdom and applies that view to Gethsemane as well.[42] For Scaer, the dependence on these ideals shines through in the way Luke has altered the prayer rendered in verse 42. Jesus "no longer requests 'what is possible,' but begins and ends his prayers with an obedient will";[43] this is not the prayer of a man distressed, but an expression of Jesus' habitual piety.[44] Jesus simply acts according to his custom when turning to God in prayer at crucial times in his life. Although Scaer does not mention this in particular, he implies that Jesus is portrayed as being consistent with his life's previous patterns and that there is no tension between his words and performance: "all these details may all be explained by Luke's consistent use of the noble death tradition."[45]

To be sure, Scaer correctly points out that Jesus' consent to the divine will comes more easily here than in Mark and Matthew, although I urge that there is a difference between Mark and Matthew in this particular case.[46] Sterling and Scaer do not, however, come to terms with the fact that Jesus in Luke does ask for a way out: "... remove this cup from me." I concur fully with Claire Clivaz, who notes that:

> ... current exegesis of Luke 22:42a frequently overlooks the fact that for readers in antiquity, Jesus' demand that the cup pass from him was the most shocking element in the Gethsemane story. Ancient readers expected that an individual confronting death should make a noble speech, or at least maintain a dignified silence that could be interpreted as proof of that individual's sensibility.[47]

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41 Sterling, "Mors Philosophi," 395–96.

42 Scaer, *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death*, 90–131.

43 Scaer, *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death*, 97.

44 Scaer, *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death*, 109.

45 Scaer, *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death*, 132.

46 The use of πλήν brings Matthew closer to Luke than Mark here, as does the conditional prayer in Matt 26:42.

47 Claire Clivaz, "The Angel and the Sweat."

### 7.3.5 *Jesus the Ideal Pray-er*

In his book *Prayer and Vindication in Luke-Acts*, Geir Otto Holmås argues that the Gethsemane prayer in Luke 22 must be seen in the light of the general role attributed to prayer in Luke's portrait of Jesus.[48] Jesus' withdrawing himself to pray (Luke 22:41) links the passage to a habit Jesus evinces elsewhere in this Gospel, as is visible in Luke 11:1–13, which also demonstrates that Jesus at prayer is a paradigmatic character: "The reader is invited to see prayer in the lives of the disciples fundamentally as an outgrowth of Jesus' special relationship with God as expressed through prayer."[49] Holmås points to the fact that there are no references in Luke's Gospel to Jesus' being at prayer between ch. 11 and the present scene, a fact that contributes to an almost iconic portrait of Jesus at prayer here. Hence, the Gethsemane scene also has a "pedagogical dimension" in this regard. For Holmås, Jesus' prayer is an example of how to face trials in genuine prayer and submission to the will of God. As Jesus approaches his passion, the reader receives a glimpse of how he commits to his Father in prayer: "... Luke wants to present Jesus as fully obedient and fully dependent on his Father."[50] In accordance with Neyrey, Holmås says that Jesus is portrayed as a "spiritual athlete" engaging in a battle through prayer, so that ἀγωνία means "struggle" or "combat." Jesus is presented as an example to disciples against whom Satan launches his assaults (Luke 22:3, 31, 53).

There is much to commend in this interpretation, as it approaches the Gethsemane scene with larger patterns traceable through the entire Gospel. However, Luke 22:42a is ultimately underestimated in Holmås' picture. This part of the prayer becomes no more than a foil against which Jesus' submissiveness comes into focus. There is no doubt that Jesus' obedience and commitment to his Father's will (cf. 10:21–22) is central here, and Luke follows Matthew by strengthening the second part of the Gethsemane prayer even further. Nonetheless, if verse 42a is agreed to include a real concern on the part of Jesus, this necessitates some nuances for the picture to be accurate.

First, it provides elements from which a more complex temptation theology may develop. In spite of the emphatic submission, verse 42a is more than a foil against which to emphasize this. In a setting where Jesus appears to be the iconic pray-er, it is strange that the only aspect that really applies to the pray-er himself is turned into rhetoric. Verse 42a paves the way for a struggle that is not exclusively marked by commitment and ardent prayer. Jesus is familiar with anxiety, precisely as verses 43–44 unfold.

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48 Holmås, *Prayer*, 102–108, 151–55.

49 Holmås, *Prayer*, 102.

50 Holmås, *Prayer*, 106.

## 7.4 Asleep from Grief

The shorter version includes only one prayer (v. 42), from which Jesus rises in verse 45 to find the disciples asleep by grief (ἀπὸ τῆς λύπης). Luke is truly distinctive here, and deliberately so. As pointed out above, there is no reference to Jesus being distressed or troubled, as with Mark and Matthew where his prayer was *motivated* by grief. Furthermore, the dictum of sorrow (περίλυπος), formulated according to Scripture in Mark and Matthew, is also absent: it is the disciples who suffer from grief. Neyrey makes the point that passion in moral philosophical terms is the issue here, and the way that Luke keeps grief kept apart from Jesus appears to support that view. Coming from that perspective, however, it is surprising that Neyrey pays no attention to how deeply steeped in ancient passion discourse verse 42a actually is. To ancient readers it must have evoked questions of passions rather than heroic courage. In spite of his submission to God's will, Jesus finds passion attractive enough to raise the question in prayer.

The phrase "asleep by grief" has recently received attention that questions the traditionally held view that the disciples fell asleep out of sadness; the idea is that sadness, or more precisely λύπη, causes rather insomnia than tiredness.[51] Claire Clivaz made this point in her 2006 essay on this topic, arguing that it is a purely literary and theological indication. "Asleep by grief" does not literally mean that the disciples were grieving about the coming arrest or death of their master, but is a metaphor for death. Hence, Jesus also invites them to "rise" (ἀνιστάναι), a resurrectional verb.[52] However, precisely the same verb is used in verse 45, where no such metaphorical interpretation seems to be in place. Jesus kneeled to pray and now he rises up. Why two different meanings should be attributed to ἀνιστάναι in verse 45 and verse 46 is not easy to see.

Recently Ilaria Ramelli has come to similar conclusions as Clivaz, although she seems unaware of her contribution. Ramelli proceeds from the fact that Luke 22:45 is the only place in the gospels where the verb κοιμᾶσθαι appears. She argues that λύπη was considered to produce not sleep but death of either

51 According to Claire Clivaz, "'Asleep by Grief' (Lk 22:45): Reading from the Body at the Crossroads of Narratology and New Historicism," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 3 (2006): 29.1–29.15 (http://novaojs.newcastle.edu.au/ojsbct/index.php/bct/article/view/98/84), *T. Dan* 4:6 "offers the expression opposite of Luke 22:45: to be awake from grief." This is misleading since the verb is followed by two accusatives here (μὴ λυπεῖσθε. ἀπὸ γὰρ λύπης ἐγείρει θυμὸν μετὰ ψευδους) and Clivaz' view fundamentally alters the meaning: "grief arouses anger as well as deceit" (OTP 1:809).

52 Clivaz, "'Asleep by Grief,'" 29.11.

body or soul: "… the disciples were in such a state of prostration, stress, sorrow, and anticipated grief that they somehow lost their senses and were like dead."[53] She points out that in the New Testament this verb "in the middle-passive, almost never means simply 'to sleep' (apart from Matt 28,13 and Acts 12,6), but always 'to die,' or in the perfect to be dead, in the body or in the soul."[54] This finds support in Philo, who associates λύπη, κοιμᾶσθαι, and loss of mind; it is like a prelude to death.[55] It represents the climax of sleep towards a senseless loss of life.[56] Accordingly, Jesus in Luke 22:46 exhorts the disciples to "recover their consciousness and pray to avoid falling into temptation, which would have caused the death of their souls."[57]

Ramelli's suggestion fails to convince for several important reasons. She admits that there are texts, even within Luke's writings, where κοιμᾶσθαι does in fact mean to sleep; in my view, Luke's Gethsemane scene should be added to that list. When Jesus finds the disciples, he asks them: "Why are you sleeping (τί καθεύδετε)?" This is the most common verb for sleeping in the New Testament and is suggestive for how the participle κοιμωμένους is best interpreted.[58] A straightforward reading, taking κοιμᾶσθαι to be synonymous with sleep, seems to me more than adequate here.

The most detailed exposition of the role of sleep in this passage is undertaken by Annette Weissenrieder and Friederike Wendt. They argue on the basis of ancient iconography and medicine that "… den Schlaf dann als Reflexion des Todes Jesu zu deuten."[59] The sleep of the disciples serves as an opportunity for both them and the reader to reflect on what it means to follow

53 Ramelli, "ΚΟΙΜΩΜΕΝΟΥΣ," 61.

54 Ramelli, "ΚΟΙΜΩΜΕΝΟΥΣ," 67; in Mark and Matthew cognates of λύπη are connected to "unto death," which Ramelli does not mention.

55 *Somn.* 1.4, 120–29, 150, 174. I do not find all these passages equally convincing; in 1.4 κοιμᾶσθαι means simply to sleep, though a philosophical intention may well be adduced from the context.

56 Within such a setting I find it questionable that λύπη cannot be at all associated with sleeping. The progressive idea here implies that such may also be the case; thus also Bovon, *Luke 3*,203–204.

57 Ramelli, "ΚΟΙΜΩΜΕΝΟΥΣ," 76.

58 On p. 68 Ramelli notes that they were "like dead," an inference from her interpretation of κοιμᾶσθαι not appearing in the text itself.

59 Annette Weissenrieder and Friedrike Wendt, "'Warum schlaft ihr?' (Lk 22,46): Überlegungen zum Jüngerbild in Lk 22,39–46 im Lichte ikonographischer und medizinhistorischer Quellen," in *Picturing the New Testament: Studies in Ancient Visual Images* (ed. A. Weissenrieder, F. Wendt, and P. von Gemünden; WUNT 2.193; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 116.

Jesus through passion and death. They claim that by analogy this happens in Luke 9:28–36, where sleep marks a phase of considering what the heavenly vision entails. However, the redactional comment in verse 34 that Peter does not understand what he says is trouble for their interpretation; to sleep in this moment seems more akin to ignorance. According to Weissenrieder and Wendt, the sleep is "Regiemittel," aimed at bringing the disciples and the readers into accordance with the passion and death of Jesus.[60]

Although Weissenrieder and Wendt have produced a significant amount of relevant material, I am doubtful as to how it is applied to this particular text. They are led to judge the sleep positively or at least not negatively: "Der Schlaf wird jedoch in der lukanischen Perikope weder bewertet, noch als 'Schwachheit des Fleisches' (Mt 26,21) negative gedeutet. Das Fragepartikel τι bezeugt an sich keinerlei Wertung."[61] However, the final statement in verse 46 urges the disciples to stay awake and thus to avoid temptation. Their sleep exposes them to the assaults of Satan.

The notion of sleeping invites figurative dimensions, as happens with so many terms in the New Testament. I concur with Clivaz and Ramelli[62] that there is a figurative dimension here, but I am doubtful that it really involves death. Most New Testament admonitions about how to stand temptations urge wakefulness and sobriety, not resurrection (1 Thess 5:1–11; Rom 13:11–14; Eph 6:1–20). However, in Eph 5:14 staying awake and being raised from death are used interchangeably, which may favor the view put forward by Clivaz and Ramelli, although none of them refer to that particular text.

Luke has certainly presented a story in which Jesus' submission to the divine will comes through in ways unseen in the other Synoptic Gospels. This contributed to a less distressed Jesus; in fact, there is no report whatsoever of an agony, which must then be inferred from the prayer itself and the circumstances implied. The paradigmatic focus that introduces the scene in verse 40 also prepares the ground for a less troubled Jesus. These observations have paved the way for the view that Jesus is portrayed in accordance with traditions of the courageous hero in Luke. Ancient readers would hardly grasp that, due to the fact that Jesus asks to be excused from his impending death and thus save himself. Against the backdrop of the ideals of manly courage, this is tanta-

60 Weissenrieder and Wendt, "'Warum schlaft ihr?,'" 121.

61 Weissenrieder and Wendt, "'Warum schlaft ihr?,'" 123.

62 As for Ramelli, I am left in some doubt about the metaphorical level; it is not entirely clear whether she takes death metaphorically or the disciples were really "like dead" (p. 68) or "close to death" (p. 76). On p. 63 she notes that Luke has added a stronger and more meaningful dimension to the metaphor of sleep in verse 46.

mount to a soldier leaving his post. His submission to the Father is emphatically stated, but Jesus is not unaffected by the passion to avoid death. His submission, though, opens a perspective from which the question of courage may be reconfigured. We return to that issue in the final chapter of this investigation.

## 7.5 Including vv. 43–44

### 7.5.1 *Neither Authentic nor Independent*

Neyrey and Clivaz, if on very different grounds, hold verses 43–44 to fit into the Lukan narrative and the immediate context. According to Clivaz, these verses are consistent with Jesus' emotions elsewhere in the Third Gospel (see above). She also holds that "sweat like blood" comes as a consequence of the intense struggle that Jesus faces in these verses.

The exegesis above affirms that Jesus is *not* in fact emotionless, which bridges to some degrees the apparent gap between the shorter and longer versions. There are still three reasons to consider verses 43–44 as unlikely to be authentic, though they are no doubt very old. First, Clivaz' attempt to explain why verses 43–44 were omitted is clever, but remains only suggestive.[63] Second, although verse 42a implies that Jesus was affected and sought a way out of distress, Luke has lowered the tone dramatically. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus returns to the disciples three times and prays three times. In Luke's shorter version, this is all mentioned only once,[64] which certainly focuses the matter, but also makes it evident that according to that version, Jesus' struggle did not last very long. The intensity is absent and he embraces God's plan more easily. Clivaz' picture runs into insuperable obstacles in verses 43–44. Third, a shift of emphasis also takes place. While the shorter version keeps the disciples in focus, that is not so in verses 43–44, which emphasize Jesus himself. In the words of Bart D. Ehrman: "The center of the passage, and hence its focus, shifts to Jesus' agony, an agony so terrible as to require a supernatural comforter for strength to bear it."[65] The picture is more complex than Ehrman and many others depict, since verse 42a implies Jesus' concern to escape. In spite of this disagreement, I concur that the shift of focus does bear upon questions

63 Even her assumption that the longer version has been shortened to become what we now call the shorter version for reasons of fighting opponents still makes Luke's version an exceptional case for a discourse perspective on Gethsemane.

64 Verses 43–44 note that Jesus prayed, but his words are not rendered.

65 Ehrman, "Did Jesus Get Angry or Agonize?" 24.

of authenticity. Verses 43–44 portray a dramatic picture not easily reconciled with what has come before in Luke.

The comparative of ἐκτενής (v. 44) indicates the escalation of the situation: "he prayed more earnestly." This is precisely where things become difficult regarding the authenticity of verses 43–44. These verses take the trouble implied in verse 42a *beyond* what is implied there, though there is some continuity. I think verses 43–44 represent an early dramatization inspired by Jesus' prayer that the cup be removed (v. 42a). Although I do not embrace the fully heroic interpretation of the shorter version, I contend that there is a tension, which not even references to Jesus' emotions more generally in Luke's Gospel can eliminate. Even Stephen Voorwinde's study on Jesus' emotions in the gospels notes that Luke records fewer emotions of Jesus.[66] In that study, Voorwinde affirms "the historical reliability of the facts recorded in 22.43–44," but at the same time holds "that these verses did not originally belong to Luke's Gospel! So we need to take these verses seriously as providing a genuine insight into Jesus' suffering, but in isolation from the rest of Luke."[67]

The fact that verses 43–44 in some manuscripts (C mg and minuscule F13) are found within Matthew's Gethsemane scene rather than Luke's is indicative that pieces of traditions circulated.[68] Although Voorwinde does not state it directly, this implies that verses 43–44 are considered analogous with the so-called *agrapha*. These were not necessarily later creations, but did represent independent traditions, some of which had no fixed place in the earliest gospel versions. Due to their form, it is awkward to label verses 43–44 as composing a true *agraphon*, but that is a useful tool for describing the early phenomenon of various pieces of text appearing in different places. There is one reason, however, that I am reluctant to embrace that logic. Verses 43–44 is neither in form nor content a self-contained unit. In fact, the appearance of these verses in Matt 26 proves this, as even there it follows Jesus' prayer. The appearance of the angel beforehand, Jesus' being strengthened by the angel, and the fact that Jesus is said to pray more earnestly all call for some narrative connection. Hence, I hold it likely that verses 43–44 develop the logic of events told in the shorter version. In spite of continuity, it is likely not authentic.

### 7.5.2 *Strengthening Angel*

The strengthening (ἐνισχύων) of an angel recalls biblical analogies suggesting that verses 43–44 were intended to follow a situation where some kind of assis-

66 Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*, 119.

67 Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*, 144.

68 For this phenomenon, see J.M. Ross, "Floating Words: Their Significance for Textual Criticism," *NTS* 38 (1992): 153–56.

tance was needed. Elijah found himself in a situation of distress, on the verge of death, when an angel appeared to him and touched him, urging him to eat. The prophet thus regained his strength (ἐπορεύθη ἐν τῇ ἰσχύι)[69] (1 Kgs 19:4–5, 7–8). Similarly, Daniel lost his strength due to not eating during a long period of mourning. An angel then appeared to him and strengthened him. In Dan 10:18–19, particularly in the Theodotion version, the phrasing is ἐνίσχυσεν με.[70] In the Book of Acts a similar pattern emerges; prayer is followed by an angelic appearance aimed at explaining, comforting, or strengthening (Acts 9:11–12; 10:9–16; 22:17). A special feature of Luke 22:43 is that the angel remains silent; no words are uttered.

Furthermore, the strengthening angel brings to mind Luke 4:10–11, the temptation scene. Faced with the temptations, Jesus cites Ps 90:11–12LXX about God's protection of the righteous in dangers: "... because he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; upon hands they will bear you up so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." The angels of Ps 90 and Luke 4 remain silent like the angel of Gethsemane; they protect and strengthen without words. All of this serves to make pertinent the fact that Luke 22:43–44 should not be interpreted in isolation from the text preceding it: a strengthening angel appears in response to a situation calling for involvement and assistance. If verses 43–44 circulated independently, any such context is missing and without it the role of the angel becomes elusive.

The interpretation of verses 43–44 is inextricably tied up with ambiguous questions, which of course is why so much ink has been spilled on so few words. Some of the disputed issues are naturally intertwined. The first question to address is the order of angel and ἀγωνία, or the fact that verse 43 comes before verse 44.[71] The question is why things deteriorated for Jesus *after* the angel appeared to strengthen him. One would expect the angel to alleviate somehow the pain and anguish, not to enhance it. Most commentators proceed as though verse 44 preceded verse 43. What to deduce from this is not at all obvious, though. If verses 43–44 were added later, they do not represent an independent tradition; they were made to fit precisely a context indicated by verse 42a, but they also take this some steps further.

This takes us to the next ambiguity, namely that the angel remains silent and the fact that the prayer of Jesus in verse 44 is not given in the text. While Jesus in verse 42 is in the position to ask for the cup to be removed, still considering a

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69 The nominal cognate of the verb used in Luke 22:43.

70 See W.J. Larkin, "The Old Testament Background of Luke XXII.43–44," *NTS* 25 (1978–79): 250–54. Apocalyptic texts, like 4 Ezra, provide similar examples.

71 This was pointed out by Lyder Brun, "Engel und Blutschweiss. Lc 22,43–44," *ZNW* 32 (1933): 273.

way out, the prayer in verse 44 comes as a result of the angel's affirming him in his divinely given mandate, thus bringing an end to the hope that was still alive in verse 42. It is in this position after being strengthened that Jesus is ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ. Raymond E. Brown takes this as an invitation to fill in the gaps. He says that the order of events alters the content to be added in the prayer of verse 44: "The arrival of an angel from heaven . . . and the consequent strengthening have told Jesus that he must enter the *peirasmos* but not without divine help. Knowing that, he prays 'more earnestly,' but this time with respect to the outcome of the *peirasmos*."[72] From this it follows that ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ does not refer primarily to the anguished prayer in verse 42, but to Jesus' reaction after it is affirmed that no exit is to be found.

Brown's solution makes sense of the comparative involved and the fact that the angel appeared after the prayer. Nonetheless, Brown's exegesis at this point is forced. If verses 43–44 were added as an elaboration, they certainly intensify the original prayer, but do not necessarily compel another prayer. The appearance of the angel after verse 42 is, therefore, to be interpreted "in the midst of" his prayer. As pointed out by Geir Otto Holmås, "[i]n Luke-Acts, angelophanies in the setting of prayer often bring out the divine favour upon the pray-er (Luke 1:13; Acts 10:2–4; 12:57)."[73] Furthermore, the intensity also serves to strengthen the dedication of Jesus to his Father's will.

### 7.5.3 *In Agony* (ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ)

A further ambiguity arises from the implications of the noun ἀγωνία. According to the *Greek-English Lexicon* of Liddell, Scott & Jones (LSJ), this noun may be either an equivalent of ἀγών, meaning struggle or contest and implying a comparison with soldiers or athletes,[74] or a reference to agony, anguish, or fear.[75] *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (BAGD) advises that this noun and its cognates underwent a change in meaning and came to denote primarily the apprehension of the mind when faced with impending distress or anguish; hence it is often associated with terms for fear or pain.[76] How this comes into play in Luke 22:43–44 has been raised in a groundbreaking way by Neyrey in the works previously referred to in this chapter. He claims that ἀγωνία here means a

72 Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 188–89; thus also Tuckett, "Luke 22,43–44," 139.

73 Holmås, *Prayer*, 107.

74 G.G. Gamba advocates this view in "Agonia di Gesù," *RivB* 16 (1968): 159–66. He compares the angel to a trainer who is preparing his athlete for the contest. Gamba anticipates a view that has much in common with Neyrey. See also Scaer, *The Lukan Passion*, 98–99.

75 s.v.

76 s.v.

combat, thus favoring the first option discussed above.[77] Neyrey draws heavily on how Philo portrays a philosophical combat against passions, thus bringing Luke's longer version into close contact with a theme most comprehensible to the Greco-Roman world: "Philo understands *agonia* as a combat waged by the rational mind against 'grief'."[78] Λύπη is the prime enemy of the mind, and the antidote is to act as an athlete and to wrestle with the passions. In contrast to the evil or unfree person encumbered by passion, the truly free person "stands defiant and triumphant over love, fear, cowardice, grief and all that sort, as the victor over the fallen in the wrestling bout.... For he meant that nothing is so calculated to enslave the mind as fearing death through desire to live" (*Prob*. 21–22, cf. 45).[79] The desire to live at any cost is clearly a cardinal passion here. Philo's texts demonstrate what ancient readers found resonant in the prayer in verse 42a, which considers the possibility of avoiding death.

According to Neyrey, "the antidote to 'grief' is the combative exercise of virtue, *agonia*."[80] Philo takes Jacob's wrestling with God (Gen 32:24–32) to serve as an example (*Mut*. 81–82) of a wrestler in whom the soul engages the passions. Against this backdrop it is of course essential to note that Luke says nothing about Jesus and grief; this is reserved only for the disciples (see above). They are therefore urged to be sober and fight grief. Jesus is, according to Neyrey, portrayed as victorious in his combat with the passions here.

In my view, Neyrey is mixing things up when he considers ἀγωνία to be the antidote against the power of the passions. Ἀγωνία is a metaphor for wrestling but not the antidote as such, which is *paideia*. This comes naturally from what we observed in Chapter 2 of this study, namely that cowardice and lack of *paideia* formed a pairing. Philo's "Every Good Man is Free" is permeated throughout with motifs taken from ancient discourses on learning, education, and culture, all of which constitute *paideia*. This is seen at the very beginning of this treatise, where the question of which "ways to walk" (1–3) is raised, a traditional motif from *paideia* texts in antiquity. The treatise is rounded off in the same terms (*Prob*. 158–60), about the need to feed children with milk first, then:

> the soft food of instruction given in the school subjects (διὰ τῶν ἐγκυκλίων), later, the harder, stronger meat, which philosophy produces. Reared by

77 Neyrey refers only to LSJ here.

78 Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke*, 58.

79 Thus also *Spec*. 4.145–46. The discourse on manly courage (ἀνδρεῖ) versus cowardice (δειλία) evolves around παιδεία and ἀμαθία. Knowing what to fear and what not to fear is a question of knowledge or ignorance, or *paideia*.

80 Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke*, 59.

> these, they will raise to manhood (ἀνδρωθεῖσαι) and robustness, they will reach the happy consummation (πρὸς τέλος) which Zeno, bids us seek, a life led agreeably to nature. (*Prob*. 160)

Thus passion (ἡδονή), fear (φόβος), grief (λύπη), and anger (ὀργή) are changed; ignorance (ἀμαθία) into good sense (φρόνησις), incontinence (ἀκολᾶσία) into self-control (σωφροσύνη), cowardice (δειλία) into courage (ἀνδρεία), and covetousness (πλεονεξία) into justice (δικαοσύνη, 159). This text even mentions encyclical studies and philosophy explicitly; those are the antidotes Philo has in mind. Furthermore, the metaphor of milk versus solid food is traditional in such a context, as is the idea of climbing towards a peak or goal.[81] Construing Luke's version as a combat about passion and grief in particular is therefore not as similar to Philo as Neyrey asserts. He ignores the role played by *paideia* in that combat and the fact that *paideia* is absent from Luke's passage, even though it is a story that lends itself to being developed in that way.[82] This does not apply only to this particular treatise, but also to Philo generally.[83] The antidote against passions is *paideia*, construed as a combat.

### 7.5.4 *Emotionally Distressed*

Furthermore, Neyrey has overlooked some Philonic texts referring to emotional disturbances. One such example is *Praem*. 148, which speaks of a combat against pleasures and passions; ἀγωνία is used differently here. Philo describes human depravation, bodily and spiritual, in the light of Lev 26 on blessing and curse. A curse will fall upon those who fail to learn wisdom (ἐπὶ τούτοις μὴ σωφρονίζοιντο), leaving the paths of wisdom; again *paideia* terminology ("way" or "walking") appears. They will be seized by cowardice (δειλία) and fear (φόβος) and will thus flee (φεύξονται), even when no one pursues them: "They will fall headlong (πεσοῦνται προτροπάδην), and the lightest sound of a leaf borne through the air will cause as much trepidation (ἀγωνίαν) and quaking (πτοίαν) as the most savage war (ὁ τραχύτατος πόλεμος) waged by mightier

81 Karl Olav Sandnes, "Markus: En allegorisk biografi?" *DTT* 69 (2006): 277–85; Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 16–78.

82 As happens in the Epistle to the Hebrews; see Chapter 9 in the present study.

83 See Sandnes, *Belly and Body*, 108–32 on how Philo writes about mastering the passions. The presentation of Jacob (*Mut*. 81–82) is also driven by these notions, which is obvious from for example *Mut*. 69–76. Furthermore, Jacob "saw God," (*Mut*. 81), which is the Philonic version of reaching the goal or end of *paideia* (*Praem*. 43–46; *Ebr*. 82–83; *Migr*. 39, 201; *Her*. 51; *Somn*. 1.171; 2.177; *Abr*. 57). These texts exemplify how Jacob's climbing the ladder (Gen 28) is combined with the ancient idea of reaching the summit or highest good within a discourse on encyclical studies and philosophy; see Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 33–36.

enemies." In such a situation, says Philo, each man flees, seeking salvation (σωτηρία) for himself, which recalls Lev 26:36. In short, altruism is abandoned; salvation is not for others, but only for oneself. What comes into view here is an aspect of courage, namely seeking the benefit of others as a contrast to selfishness. With regard to how Jesus is portrayed in verses 43–44, it is worth noting that the person seized by passions falls to the ground and seeks his *own* rescue. This troubled person suffers ἀγωνία. This is a context for ἀγωνία that fits Luke 22:43–44 nicely, and where ἀγωνία is intimately connected to combat but also includes aspects that the struggle brings upon the combatant himself.

In his discussion of the Decalogue, Philo addresses the question of desires (*Decal.* 144–45), which he summarizes with the passion λύπη. In this passage, λύπη shows itself in many ways, though, such as depression and dejection. Philo then turns to fear (φόβος), which brings with it both trepidation (πτοία̂) and distress (ἀγωνία). The context militates against rendering ἀγωνία as "combat" here. In *Legat.* 243 and 266, furthermore, ἀγωνία refers to intense emotions accompanied by bodily affections such as gasping, spasmodic breathing, the face turning red, pale, and livid all at once, and "sweat streaming over every limb amid a flood of ceaseless tears."

This finds substantiation also in the reaction of Philo and his delegation after their meeting with the Emperor (*Legat.* 366). They were on the brink of giving up on their mission, having lost all strength, and they prepared for death. In their ἀγωνία, they turned to God, praying that he would put the wrath of Gaius (Caligula) on hold. The ambivalence of ἀγωνία is obvious here. Philo's distress actually runs contrary to the ideals presented in his philosophical treatises. It militates for instance against his own presentation in *Virt.* 18–26; there Philo addresses manly courage (ἀνδρεία) as opposed to womanly attitudes (ἀνανδρία).

Due to the importance of verse 42a in my presentation, I am more than doubtful about interpretations that deny Jesus' concern for fleeing from this moment and that, like Neyrey, portray Jesus as having been victorious in his combat with the passions. I do not think that Luke is as sensitive to commonly held ideals as has been suggested by scholars following in Neyrey's wake.[84] Glimpses of a redefinition of manly courage may come into view here, though, if courage is attached to the unselfish attitude of Jesus rather than the question of passions.[85]

Finally, Neyrey works out in detail that ἀγωνία in Luke 22:43–44 is a combat against passion and grief. At the same time, he emphasizes that it is

84 Luke 18:23, where περίλυπος is used, is an indication that a philosophical discourse can scarcely be assumed from the mere appearance of λύπη itself.

85 See Chapter 20.5.2 of the present study.

an eschatological combat with the devil. The two claims are insufficiently knit together in his contributions on this disputed passage.

### 7.5.5 *Sweat Like Drops of Blood*

The ἀγωνία in which Jesus finds himself after the angel strengthens him brings physical turmoil; his sweat falls to the ground like (ὡσεὶ) drops of blood. I have argued that the agony of Jesus involves both anguish and combat; this ambiguity must also be applied to this physical description. It is not simply an athlete's strenuous fight. The phenomenon of bloody sweat, often labeled *haematodrosis*, is witnessed to in ancient sources,[86] of which *Jos. Asen.* 4:9 serves as an example: "And when Aseneth heard these words from her father, plenty of red sweat poured over her face, and she became furious with great anger, and looked askance at her father with her eyes,. . ." (OTP 2:207).[87] In this passage, the red sweat is an expression of anger and temperament. 4 Macc 7:8 is even more relevant, as the martyrs are urged to defend the Law with "their own blood and noble sweat." This passage is very much in line with Neyrey's interpretation of Jesus as an athlete in Luke 22:44.

François Bovon has drawn attention to the account of the death of Abraham in the long version of the *Testament of Abraham* (2nd century CE).[88] Death approaches him, saying: "I am the bitter cup of death (τὸ πικρὸν τοῦ θανάτου ποτήριον, *T. Ab.* 16:12). Ch. 20 of the text offers a dialogue between Abraham and Death. Abraham describes his situation:

> I feel very faint of heart (ἀθυμία πολλή μοι ἐστίν). From the time when I beheld you with my eyes, my strength has failed (ἡ ἰσχύς μου ἐκλείπει); all the limbs of my flesh seem to be like lead weight, and my breath is very labored. Depart for a little; for I said, I cannot bear to see your form. (*T. Ab.* 20:4–5)

Some manuscripts of 20:5 say that a tear fell from his face, like a drop of blood (<κατῆλθε γὰρ ὁ ἱδρὼς ἐκ τῆς ὄψεως αὐτοῦ> ὡσεὶ θρόμβοι αἵματος). OTP 1:895 does not include that element, nor does Francis Schmidt.[89] Abraham is anguished

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86 See Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 184–85; Clivaz, "A Sweat like Drops of Blood," 8–10.

87 A text seldom mentioned in this connection is Homer *Il.* 16.499, where Zeus sheds tears of blood when he realizes that he cannot stop the death of Sarpedon at the hands of Patroclus.

88 Bovon, *Luke 3*,201–202.

89 F. Schmidt, *Le Testament Grec d'Abraham: Introduction, edition critique des deux recensions grecques, traduction* (TSAJ 11; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986).

and deeply troubled at the prospect of his imminent death.[90] The text is strikingly similar to Luke 22:44, even in introducing the physical phenomenon as a simile. According to Dale C. Allison, Jr., "chap. 20 contains a bit of a Christ typology. We read in verse 5 that the sweat of Abraham's face 'came down like drops of blood.' The formulation depends upon Luke 22:44, and in both places we have to do with someone who is struggling with death."[91] The way Abraham is described is on the line between physical reality and figurative speech. The simile aims at a dramatization of the physical turmoil, as with Jesus in Luke 22:44. Jesus is described as utterly troubled by the destiny that lies ahead of him. This verse bears witness in a special way to his human frailty.

## 7.6 Summing Up

According to Jerome H. Neyrey, " [a]lthough the term 'courage' (*andreia*) does not occur in Luke's text, Jesus is shown to be dramatizing the practice of that virtue and would have been perceived as such."[92] My presentation has argued that, if Neyrey is correct, both the shorter and longer versions in Luke have presented the case poorly. One of the first pagan interpreters argued on the basis of precisely the longer version that Jesus failed to comply with the ideals of that culture. Jesus needed assistance because he was unable to cope with a situation that men of culture were expected to face courageously. Rather than being a hero or an athlete combating passion victoriously, Julian and other critics see Jesus against the backdrop of Luke's text as a pitiful wretch. While they need not guide our reading of Luke's text or of Jesus' behavior, it is worth noting that the very people who were so firmly rooted in the cultural sensibilities of that culture found this episode sorely lacking.

Nonetheless, the shorter version does lean towards the ideals of noble death and masculinity, though not as consistently as many scholars have assumed. Jesus is not emotionless in either the longer or the shorter version. Jesus' prayer in verse 42a has proven to be the real watershed in the exegesis of the Lukan versions. In the eyes of most ancient readers, this is the most shocking part of this passage, but it is often overlooked by present-day scholars.

Due to the split in the textual evidence, the discourse on Gethsemane comes to the surface within this very text. Here Bart D. Ehrman's notion of

90 Rather different from the picture of the martyrs; see Chapter 3 in the present study.

91 Dale J. Allison, Jr., *Testament of Abraham* (CEJL; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 386.

92 Neyrey, *The Passion According to Luke*, 54.

textual criticism as a window into ongoing disputes is a helpful reminder.[93] Verses 43–44 develop the prayer in verse 42 by portraying Jesus in agony in such a way that his obedience is strengthened. Furthermore, these verses make it clear that this is a time of trial for Jesus (Luke 22:28). Thus verses 43–44 bring out the agony that is implicit in verse 42.

The disputed verses (vv. 43–44) add some theological aspects to this story. The shorter version offers thin gruel in contexts where the true humanity of Jesus is high on the agenda. In this way, verses 43–44 reverse a gradual trend that disputed that Jesus was troubled. This can be argued with reference to its early use in Justin and Irenaeus, for example (see below). On the other hand, the Christological relevance of the passage is less than clear since the angelic intervention comes with a mixed message, as Emperor Julian notes.

These verses also strengthen the paradigmatic nature of the text. Verses 43–44 may enhance Jesus as an example who embraced God's will irrespective of his internal turmoil. He becomes the ideal pray-er. The way that Gethsemane is used in Hebrews (see below) is enough to argue that at least some have found the modified version less effective as a paradigm in situations of temptation. The verses in question, then, strengthen the humanity of Jesus and simultaneously portray him as overcoming temptation.

### 7.6.1 *From God's Power to His Will*

What we have seen in the Synoptic Gospels may be summarized in this section's title. This movement takes place progressively through the three gospels, and is in fact, the most significant movement to be traced. Within it, the Synoptic Gospels have unanimously conveyed the picture, if with different emphases, that Jesus embraced the will of God hesitantly and his situation caused him distress. While Mark has Jesus focus on God's power and ability, still hoping for a divine interference that will have the cup pass from him, Matthew and especially Luke make Jesus focus on God's will and plan. Thus, his personal fate moves more into the background. This also has repercussions on the agony; it comes out most strongly in Mark and less strongly in Luke' shorter version. Luke's longer version seems to take a step back; by gradually shifting the emphasis to the will and plan of God, Jesus' struggle in Gethsemane is being incorporated into questions of far-reaching theological significance. Within what appears a fractured masculinity at best, a negotiated masculinity emerges in the altruistic purpose of his agony. That paves the way for redescribing the scene as marked not by fear and attempts to escape, but by unselfish suffering for the benefit of others.[94]

93 Ehrman, "The Text as Window."

94 See Chapter 20.5.2 of the present study.

CHAPTER 8

# The Fourth Gospel: Gethsemane Reconfigured

Embarking on the Fourth Gospel means entering a different literary and theological world. What happens to Jesus' agony and prayer at Gethsemane when the narrative and theological parameters change as they do in this Gospel?

## 8.1 Johannine Transformations

Before turning to the relevant texts, the idiosyncrasy of the Fourth Gospel as it pertains to the portrayal of Gethsemane must be reviewed. In the narrative setting of John, Jesus finds himself in Gethsemane with his disciples in 18:1–11. The garden scene is radically narrowed and equally focused; it is only an arrest scene, although much theology hides beneath the surface. Jesus at prayer and his agony do not appear in John. Jesus is portrayed in a way that narratively fulfils his prayer in 17:5: "So now, Father, glorify (δόξασόν) me in your presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed." Accordingly, the arrest scene in Gethsemane becomes majestic and Jesus' hour of death is simultaneously his glorification (John 12:23–24; 13:31; 17:4). The blending of death and glorification has deep implications for the narrative,[1] and Gethsemane is caught up in this transformation.

Even during his arrest, Jesus is in charge. He twice states his identity by saying ἐγώ εἰμι, which is to be interpreted against the background of other such passages in the Gospel that draw on biblical texts such as Isa 43:10; 45:18; 51:12.[2] The arrest is turned into a theophany and NRSV accordingly renders this "I am he" (John 18:5 cf. 8:24, 58). When this self-presentation is followed immediately by Judas and his followers' stepping back and falling to the ground (ἀπῆλθον εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω καὶ ἔπεσαν χαμαί), the scene is very nearly a Johannine version of Paul's Phil 2:9–11; the whole world, including enemies, bow down to Jesus. An arrest construed as a theophany is indeed a paradox, but that is precisely what John does here. Furthermore, Jesus' impending death is presented according to the ideal of giving one's life for one's friends: "So if you are looking for me,

1 Craig Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 41–42, 108–23.

2 See Anton Dauer, *Die Passionsgeschichte im Johannesevangelium. Eine traditionsgeschichtliche und theologische Untersuchung zu Joh 18,1–19,30* (SANT 30; Munich: Kösel 1972), 242–46.

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let these men go … I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me" (John 18:8–9). This echoes John 15:13 on giving up one's life to save friends from dying.

This ideal would of course be jeopardized, perhaps fatally, by Jesus' praying to be released from this very moment. While the Son of Man in the Synoptic Gospels must (δεῖ) suffer, in John's Gospel the Son of Man must (δεῖ) be lifted up (ὑψωθῆναι, 3:14 cf. 8:28; 12:32, 34). The Fourth Gospel pictures Jesus' death and the events leading up to it in a way that differs markedly from what any observer would have been inclined to think about crucifixion in antiquity. Jesus is depicted retrospectively with a view to the instruction given by the Spirit in this Gospel (John 2:22; 12:16). This also transforms the Gethsemane traditions, as the following paragraphs make clear.

According to Richard Bauckham, John's Gospel aims at "completing Mark."[3] The introductory chapter of the present study notes that this overly simplifies the complexity of the relationship, but John[4] nevertheless assumes knowledge of the Jesus traditions in the Synoptic Gospels and partly "completes" and partly alters, negotiates, and transforms them. Traditions familiar from the Synoptic Gospels may therefore appear unexpectedly with regard to both *where* they are situated and the *form* they take.[5] One example pertaining to Gethsemane will suffice to make this point. Readers of this Gospel have wondered why the exorcisms so central to the tradition have left no traces on John's story. It is worth noting, however, that this synoptic motif of "casting out" demons here describes Jesus' victorious death as an act of casting out (ἐκβληθήσεται) "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31). Thus John draws on language and motifs found in, for example, Matt 12:22–30. This analogy helps us understand John more

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3 Richard Bauckham, "John for Readers of Mark," in *The Gospels for all Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (ed. R. Bauckham; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 147–71.

4 There is in the present study no claim of authorship of this label.

5 See also Paul N. Anderson, "Aspects of Interfluentiality Between John and the Synoptics: John 18–19 as a Case Study," in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. G. van Belle; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), 711–28. With reference to Gethsemane, Anderson says: "Several of the contacts also are out of place, or used in a different setting ("let us leave," the "hour" of Jesus, the I Am saying, "drinking the cup" of Jesus for instance), and the fact that they are buzz words, or highly memorable expressions, bolsters the thesis that contact during the oral stages of the two traditions is the most likely explanation if some contact indeed took place" (p. 723). With Maurits Sabbe, "The Arrest of Jesus in Jn 18,1–11 and its Relation to the Synoptic Gospels: A Critical Evaluation of A. Dauer's Hypothesis," in *Studia Neotestamentica: Collected Essays* (BETL 98; Leuven. Leuven University Press, 1991), 355–88, I think that familiarity with the synoptic tradition combined with creativity is the key to unlocking the narrative style of John.

richly than references to Satan being cast down in the Book of Revelation.[6] This example has a direct bearing on the question of Gethsemane traditions in John's Gospel, since John 12:31 is found precisely in one of the texts echoing that scene (see below). John brings Gethsemane traditions into a framework of divine *agôn* with the devil, such a major aspect of the Synoptic Gospels' accounts of this incident. With reference to the tradition of Jesus' casting out demons, Jesus' death in the Fourth Gospel becomes the one and only exorcism, what Stephen Voorwinde calls "the great exorcism."[7] This Gospel prepares the ground for sophisticated interpretations.

In the light of this we now ask what has become of Jesus' prayer to have the cup pass from him at Gethsemane, and whether John can fit it into this portrayal of Jesus and his death. In seeking an answer to those questions, we need to take a closer look at John 18:11 and 12:27–33 and enter a Christological issue classically addressed by Rudolf Bultmann and his student Ernst Käsemann. According to Bultmann, Jesus in this gospel is merely human, while Käsemann claims that his humanity amounts to Docetism since Jesus is throughout portrayed as divine. This debate sets the scene for Stephen Voorwinde's investigation into the emotions of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel (2005), which is certainly pertinent to the present investigation.

## 8.2 "Should I Not Drink the Cup?" John 18:11

Peter interferes during the arrest in the garden, trying to prevent it physically with a sword. He is confronted firmly by Jesus: "Am I not to drink the cup (τὸ ποτήριον) that the Father has given me?" This rhetorical question is, of course, to be answered affirmatively. Jesus will certainly empty the cup, emphasizing that he is in complete accordance with his Father's will. The cup is given him to drink by the Father, so emptying the cup and his Father's will are inseparable. By implication, any attempt to escape from this is tantamount to questioning the divine will or plan for salvation. The rhetorical question is formulated in a way that continues a development from Matthew's second prayer (26:42) and Luke 22:42, where the Father's will is foregrounded and thus provides the

6 Thus Rudolph Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John Volume Two: Commentary on Chapters 5–12* (Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament; London: Burns & Oates, 1980), 392.

7 Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel: Human or Divine?* (LNTS 284; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 190.

context in which the question of the cup makes sense. John takes the final step in this direction, by having Jesus flatly deny any attempt to avoid the cup.

In the words of Maurits Sabbe, "to speak of the agony of Jesus at this moment is not fitting when he (*i.e.* John) wants to emphasize the majesty of the Lord freely approaching his passion and death."[8] In this citation, Sabbe moves from Jesus' submissiveness to the divine will to the assumption that this leaves no place for agony. Sabbe claims that John actually removes one of the two characteristics of agony and prayer seen in the synoptic versions, leaving only the latter. We must examine John's words to test Sabbe's view.

Commentaries commonly state that this verse recalls the Gethsemane episode as we know it from the Synoptic Gospels.[9] According to George Beasley-Murray, John 18:11 is "reminiscent of Gethsemane,"[10] while Rudolph Schnackenburg says that "John formulates the saying in his own way . . . and it sounds more determined in his version. Jesus not only surrenders to the Father's will, but takes it over with total conviction."[11] Jörg Frey points out that the cup prayer in the Fourth Gospel resonates in John 12:27–28 and 18:11, concentrated on the motifs of escape, hour and cup, and that John transforms these motifs: "Doch finden sich zwischen diesen (und anderen johanneischen Texten) und der markinischen Perikope eine Reihe auffälliger Entsprechungen, die sich m.E. nur im Sinne einer (kritischen) Rezeption dieser Perikope durch den vierten Evangelisten erklären lassen."[12] Frey's comment stimulates further searches for such correspondences. This chapter proceeds along that line and includes texts that Frey does not discuss. I fully agree with these scholars, but I do think that John's "own way," as it were, has been belittled and is not sufficiently accounted for. Jesus is indeed more determined, but we have to ask whether there is any place at all for the agony in John's Christology. Furthermore, given its importance in the Synoptics, we must seek the prayer that the cup pass from him, if it is to be found even implicitly, in the Fourth Gospel.

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8 Sabbe, "The Arrest of Jesus," 359.

9 For example Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary Volume II* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 875; J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010), 895–96

10 George Beasley-Murray, *John. Second Edition* (WBC 36; Nashville.: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 323.

11 Rudolph Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John Volume Three: Commentary on Chapters 13–21* (London: Burns & Oates 1982), 227.

12 Jörg Frey, "Das Vierte Evangelium auf dem Hintergrund der älteren Evangelientradition: Zum Problem: Johannes und die Synoptiker, " in *Johannesevangelium: Mitte oder Rand des Kanons? Neue Standortbestimmungen* (ed. Thomas Söding; QD 203; Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 2003), 86–93; quotation on p. 86.

### 8.2.1 *Similarities with Synoptic Traditions*

Let us first posit that John 18:11 is a transformation of Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane. The similarities are striking and can be summarized thusly: as for geographical setting, both Mark and Matthew mention a "place called Gethsemane," while Luke has "Mount of Olives." Although Gethsemane is not named in John 18, the information about Jesus entering "a garden across the Kidron Valley" refers to the same place. As for narrative setting, the Synoptic Gospels have the Passion Narrative and Jesus' impending death as the context of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane. John 18:11 is found within this narrative setting and plot. As for persons involved, Luke assumes the presence of the disciples generally, while Mark and Matthew reserve this moment in Jesus' life for only Peter, James, and John. In the Fourth Gospel, the words about the cup are directed at Peter. The sword mentioned in 18:10 echoes a tradition firmly established in Gethsemane from Mark 14:47 on.

In the Synoptics, God's will is the central issue, though expressed in various ways. In John, the cup is "given by the Father." The appearance of "Father" itself evokes the prayer as it is found in all first three gospels. In terms of key terminology, τὸ ποτήριον (cup) in John 18:11 echoes the word used in the Synoptics. John 18:11 has the verb "drink" (πίνω), which corresponds to Matt 26:42, but is not found in Mark. It is, however, a possible echo of Mark 10:38par where Jesus predicts his death in terms of "emptying a cup" and uses precisely this verb. Finally, all synoptic scenes occupy themselves with the question of temptation (Mark 14:38; Matt 26:41; Luke 22:40, 46), making that the core of the story. In John 18:11 the role of temptation is present but significantly altered. Simon Peter's attempt to interfere with or stop Jesus' arrest brings to mind his role in Mark 8:31–33parr, where he also attempts to prevent Jesus from dying. Hence, a plea to avoid the cup still plays a role in this Gospel, but is found in Peter rather than Jesus, even to the point of using violence to achieve it. Clearly, Peter's temptation is accounted for in other and perhaps more important passages in the synoptic tradition. What still makes it relevant to think of the garden here is that his interference echoes the role of the swords in the Gethsemane tradition (Mark 14: 47; Matt 26:52; Luke 22:49–50).

### 8.2.2 *Dissimilarities with the Synoptic Traditions*

These similarities are indeed, many and collectively represent a strong case that Gethsemane traditions are reworked in John. The differences are, however, no less important, since they are equally indicative of how John transforms traditions. In the first place, what in the Synoptic Gospels is a prayer becomes in John 18:11 a rhetorical question to be answered affirmatively; of course Jesus will empty the cup. From this follows the altered role of "Father"

in John's text. Since it is no longer a proper prayer, the "Father" is no longer the addressee. In John's version, Peter is the addressee of the question in 18:11, which is equivalent to a denial that Jesus would even consider asking to avoid the cup. Having pointed out that temptation is an issue in all versions, it is no less obvious that John alters it as well. Temptation terminology (πειρασμός and cognates) does not appear, but the narrative role of Peter brings out the theme. Although the Fourth Gospel is not explicit, it may be inferred from John's way of employing synoptic traditions that Peter's attempt to stop the events stands in for Satan's errand (cf. on 12:31 above).

Much more important, though, is that temptation in John 18 is restricted to Peter alone. The temptation comes solely from the *outside*, unlike the Synoptic Gospels, where the temptation arises from Jesus' own fear leading to the cup prayer. In John this never becomes a problem since there is no internal temptation at all. Jesus is throughout determined and willing to suffer and die; this is the very "hour" for which he has come.

## 8.3 "The Hour": John 12:27–33

As with many scholars I hold this to be the Johannine version of the agony in Gethsemane.[13] The connecting links are manifold. The scriptural quotation in verse 27a (ἡ ψυχή μου τετάρακται) echoes the citation found in Mark and Matthew, though they quote another text from the tradition of the righteous sufferer. Verse 27b echoes the prayer in Gethsemane in both wording and style. However, verse 27b offers a rhetorical question of whether Jesus should pray for rescue, which is emphatically denied. The somewhat unspecific "hour" (ἡ ὥρα) used in Mark 14:35, 37 and Matt 26:40 soon becomes a more precise and concise notion in their own texts: "the hour has come" (Mark 14:41) and "the hour is at hand" (Matt 26:45). In John's Gospel, though, this "moment" is developed into a *theology* of the "hour."[14] With reference to the hour that has arrived (ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦτο ἦλθον εἰς τὴν ὥραν ταύτην, v. 27b), Jesus refuses any prayer aimed at his rescue. John thus brings the prayer of Jesus into fundamental consistency with the purpose of his ministry, which in John finds its most appropriate term in "the hour." In bringing together the Gethsemane tradition

13 Hermann Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 435–36; Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 692–93.

14 John 2:4; 4:1; 5:25, 28; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20. Cha, "Confronting Death," 246 rightly considers the Johannine "hour" as an alteration and deepening of the occurrence of this term in Mark and Matthew.

and the Johannine notion of "hour," Jesus in Gethsemane becomes fully integrated into the passion itself, which the overall already points to in John 2:4. The inconsistency problem of the synoptic accounts is overcome here.

### 8.3.1 *Agonized but Courageous*

It is worth observing, particularly since many scholars neglect it, that the agony itself is not totally absent from the Fourth Gospel. According to verse 27, Jesus went through a troubling of the soul similar to the synoptic agony scene, notwithstanding the many differences involved. As a matter of fact, the rhetorical question in John makes no sense if the troubled heart is simply ignored. Targeting scholars like Rudolf Bultmann, who holds that the agony scene runs contrary to the glorification perspective of this gospel, Raymond E. Brown notes that "... it is not certain that glory and anguish are mutually exclusive."[15] John's text makes this apparent with a citation of Ps 6:4–5:

> καὶ ἡ ψυχή μου ἐταράχθη σφόδρα. καὶ σύ, κύριε, ἕως πότε; ἐπίστρεψον, κύριε, ῥῦσαι τὴν ψυχήν μου, σῶσόν με ἕνεκεν τοῦ ἐλέους.
>
> And my soul also was troubled very much, and you, O Lord—how long? Turn, O Lord; rescue my soul; save me for the sake of your mercy. (NETS)

This is not the text quoted in the Synoptic Gospels, but the genre and issue are effectively the same, as the figure of the righteous sufferer expresses a fear of death. John's aim is likely not to cite one particular text, but to bring into the picture a special *kind* of biblical texts. Psalm 41:6–7a, 12LXX, the text that comes closest to Mark's and Matthew's versions of the anguish, also bears resemblances to Jesus' dictum in John's Gospel:

> ἵνα τί περίλυπος εἶ, ψυχή, καὶ ἵνα τί συνταράσσεις με; ἔλπισον ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, ὅτι ἐξομολογήσομαι αὐτῷ. σωτήριον τοῦ προσώπου μου ὁ θεός μου. πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν ἡ ψυχή ἐταράχθη...[16]
>
> Why are you deeply grieved, O my soul, and why are you throwing me into confusion? Hope in God, because I shall acknowledge him; my God is deliverance of my face. My soul was troubled at myself... (NETS)

15 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII–XXI* (AB; London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1972), 814–15.

16 Ps 30:10LXX is another text mentioned in the margin in Nestle-Aland 28th edition.

Jesus is portrayed in a way that makes the wider biblical background resonate here. Psalm 6 is certainly the text closest to John 12:27 and therefore also merits comment. John's borrows the words from this psalm but not the genre of their appearance in the earlier text. The wording in John 12:27 is part of a prayer in Psalm 6. "The troubled soul" is the very reason for addressing God, hoping that he will bring salvation and rescue. This is, however, precisely what Jesus *denies* according to John 12:27b; he does not consider that an option at all. The scriptural quotation in John 12:27a is no longer part of a prayer, but serves simply to depict the agonized Jesus. This is the most important difference between the two traditions, not the level of Jesus' agony.[17] The dictum of Ps 6:4b, directed to the Lord, is in John turned into a question aimed at those present or at the reader or both. Jesus asks if he, faced with a situation analogous to Psalm 6, should utter the words of its verse 5 (σῶσόν με) and answers himself in the negative. A contrast with this biblical text, therefore, becomes apparent and makes all the difference. The original, petitional prayer evolves into a prayer for his Father's name to be glorified (John 12:28, see below).[18]

The prayer uttered in Psalm 6 is motivated by the fear of death.[19] Such a fear is present in John 12, but does not inspire any prayer other than for God's name to be glorified. Johannes Beutler has suggested that John 12:27 represents Gethsemane traditions found in Mark 14:34 and centered on Psalm 42 (41).[20] His insistence on John's familiarity with Gethsemane is helpful, but if Ps 42 (41):6–7, 12 (cf. 43 [42]:5) is in the background here, it refers equally to how John transforms his traditions. The question "why are you deeply grieved, O soul?" in the psalm marks the transition from despair to hope, indicating that such grief is unnecessary. The trust is in the Lord who will provide salvation. In fact, this psalm is more in line with the Johannine interpretation, since the agony voiced there and in the psalm serves as a prelude to trust rather than an agony leading to a cry for help.

17 *Pace* Thomas Söding, "Einsatz des Lebens: Ein Motiv johanneischer Soteriologie," in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (BETL 200; ed. G. van Belle; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), 368.

18 According to Jo-Ann A. Brant, *John* (Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2011), 193, "John recasts the Gethsemane prayer found in the synoptic tradition." In my view, the prayer is not merely recast but denied.

19 See v. 5 in particular: "Because in death there is no one who makes mention of you, and in Hades who will acknowledge you?

20 Johannes Beutler, "Psalm 42/43 im Johannesevangelium," *NTS* 25 (1987): 33–57.

### 8.3.2 *Emotional Jesus*

According to John 12:27, Jesus is terrified. The verb ταράσσω in John 5:7 is used about water being stirred, disturbed, or imbalanced. Figuratively, this verb portrays the disciples in John 14:1, where it is used synonymously with δειλάτω, certainly the most common term for being fearful or acting cowardly.[21] On three occasions, it is used about Jesus' emotional disturbance: John 11:33; 12:27, and 13:21.[22] Stephen Voorwinde has investigated these passages in detail and finds that they refer to being troubled or terrified by fear.[23] Voorwinde has shown persuasively that Jesus in this gospel is emotionally analogous to how Yahweh reacts towards his covenantal people in the Old Testament.[24] He observes that the emotions of Jesus "are linked almost without exception to the passion,"[25] and that they are "soteriologically driven." This gives his emotions simultaneous human and divine aspects, which emerges most clearly in the three instances of ταράσσω.

In John 11:33 (see also vv. 35, 38), the tears of Jesus are indeed a human reaction, but they take on another role if the significance attributed to the Lazarus story in this gospel is taken into account: "… we have noted a complex interweaving of the human and the divine into the fabric of the narrative, but such inter-weaving is not to be found in the expressions of Jesus' emotions *per se*."[26] Jesus' awareness that Lazarus will come to life at the cost of Jesus' own life is the key to unlocking his emotions. In John 13:21, Jesus announces that he will shortly be betrayed, suggesting a picture of disturbance as he faces death. This is certainly his frail humanity, but it is also his foreknowledge of what is to come upon him. The "hour" is already experienced in the heart and emotions of Jesus; it is less about psychology and more about the "hour" here.

Similarly, John 12:27, which is so intimately connected to this turning point in the Johannine story, reports as the "hour" draws near: "Jesus is overcome by emotion and does not hesitate to admit it."[27] Thus Jesus is still in distress, but

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21 The term is often used pejoratively as the opposite of ἀνδρεία, as pointed out in many places in the present study.

22 Beutler, "Psalm 42/43," 34–35 argues that John 13:21 is a variant of 12:27 and, with Gethsemane and Psalm 42 (43) as the backdrop, that John 13:21 is about the betrayal of Judas.

23 Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel*, 177–82, 191–95.

24 For a list of texts about the emotional Jesus, see *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel*, 81–83.

25 *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel*, 266.

26 *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel*, 185.

27 *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel*, 189. I am hesitant about Voorwinde's term "overcome" here. Jesus feels the emotions strongly, but never asks for a way out. The importance of the agony is recognized in John's Gospel due to the paradoxical way in which suffering

this never leads to any kind of cup prayer. However, yet another aspect comes into play here. Seen against the backdrop of the "hour," much more than the death of an individual is at stake. The death of Jesus involves judgment of the world and confrontation with its prince (vv. 31–33). His human agony implies "a conflict of cosmic proportions."[28]

A special feature of the Johannine text is that the agony of Jesus is absorbed into his passion as the moment of his being "lifted up" (John 12:32).[29] This moment, described as "now" (νῦν), coincides with the "hour" of verse 27 (the Passion Narrative), which in this Gospel is narratively initiated by the arrest scene in Gethsemane. This has natural repercussion on the garden scene. The agony is not primarily an inner struggle, but Jesus now fighting the devil, "the ruler of this world" (v. 31, see above). Jesus' anxiety appears isolated since it is never taken up in prayer.

I am hesitant about the subtitle "human or divine" of Voorwinde's important contribution, although he repeatedly states that emotions per se are not divine, and that Jesus' emotions cannot be distributed respectively to his humanity or divinity.[30] Neither fear nor its opposite qualifies divinity in John's Gospel, but Voorwinde confuses this picture by saying that Jesus' emotions are somehow equally human and divine. It is by no means clear why Jesus' supernatural insights into his destiny qualify his divinity in any respect. Voorwinde has proven beyond doubt that Jesus' emotions in the Fourth Gospel are intimately connected to soteriology, but it takes more than is in the text to say divine as totally distinct from human. The emotions involved in Jesus' terror are not caused by his own destiny alone, but also by his pain for others. The soteriological aspect involved makes them genuinely *altruistic* emotions.

### 8.3.3 *No Prayer*

In the garden, Jesus acts in a way that differs markedly from the psalm. In his fear, he speaks from the legacy of the psalms, but he does not embrace the practice of prayer so closely associated with it. The two major narrative Jesus traditions found in the New Testament agree that Jesus was afraid, even terrified, as his death was drawing near. "Although John records no Gethsemane

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and glory are simultaneous and hence form a unity. The prayer to be "glorified" does not, therefore, contradict agony. Jesus is able to overcome the agony in order to do his Father's will. No struggle is actually depicted; it is only assumed in 12:27.

28 *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel*, 194.

29 See also John 3:14; 8:28, 12:34.

30 Later in this investigation we see that this is precisely what happens due to the ideal of divinity as characterized by *apatheia*; see Chapters 4.1.4; 12.2–4; 16; 17.3; 18.3; 20, 6.

scene, he hardly portrays a Jesus who conforms to the Stoic ideal of *apatheia* or to the Hellenistic ideal of devout reason."[31] According to Craig S. Keener, John "tones down the intensity of Jesus' agony."[32] That statement is imprecise, as the Synoptic Gospels show important internal dissimilarities precisely in that regard, as is clear by comparing the Lukan version to the other two. More important is that these two traditions differ when it comes to how Jesus reacted to his anxiety. In Mark and Matthew, the agony leads to prayer. The shorter version in Luke's Gospel makes no mention at all of an agony that precedes the cup prayer, while the longer version is open to different interpretations.[33]

In John's Gospel the prayer is turned into a question that is answered in the negative: such a prayer is simply out of the question. In Mark and Matthew, it is precisely the association of lamentation and prayer that form the gist of the explanation for Jesus' performance in Gethsemane. By leaving out the prayer, in fact denying it, but retaining the lamentation, John has Jesus speak differently. The Old Testament background that was so important in Mark and Matthew does not come into play similarly here. In the Fourth Gospel, it is the commitment as such that marks Jesus' obedience and piety, not the simultaneity of dread and prayer.

The agony is of course present in John's portrayal of Jesus, but it does not lead to a prayer for being relieved; on the contrary, he prays for "glorification." Jesus' agony serves as a prelude to denying any attempt to be saved from the moment of death. In the words of Anton Dauer: "Was also bei den Synoptikern noch echte Bitte war, ist in Joh lediglich als eine Überlegung Jesu angedeutet."[34] Jesus' response to this consideration is introduced with ἀλλὰ, which here simply means "no."[35] Jesus contemplates praying, but ends up precluding it as an option.[36]

### 8.3.4 *No Temptation*

From what is said about the missing prayer, it follows that the temptation perspective is absent in John. I concur with Kasper Bro Larsen who says that temptation on the part of Jesus does not work in the Fourth Gospel, since Jesus has an exceptional knowledge about what will happen. Temptation can only

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31 Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel*, 194–95.

32 Keener, *The Gospel of John. Volume Two*, 875.

33 See Chapter 7 of the present study.

34 Dauer, *Passionsgeschichte*, 283.

35 Blass et al. §448.4 refers to this Johannine text to prove that ἀλλὰ often takes on the meaning "no or not."

36 Not unlike John Chrysostom; see Chapter 17.4 of the present study.

work if the person tempted is in some doubt about the outcome of a crisis, which is not the case in John's Gospel: "... there is no room for a Gethsemane scene where Jesus asks the Father to take away the bitter cup of painful death."[37] Hence, temptation is "lost" in John's Gospel. When Larsen says that "Jesus' agony on the cross is also absent ...," it is clear that he sees Gethsemane similarly, but Larsen fails to distinguish between agony and prayer. The absence of temptation and prayer is consistent, but the agony is something else. Temptation on the part of Jesus is denied in John's Gospel, so there is no need to pray for escape or assistance, but agony is part and parcel of the paradoxical Christology of this Gospel. Consequently, Larsen's use of "Docetism" is somewhat misleading here, as is also the case with Ernst Käsemann's Johannine Christology on this point.

The absence of the cup prayer naturally raises anew the question of courage. What was most shocking to ancient readers, that Jesus sought a way out of his distress, has been removed. This also bridges the fundamental inconsistency between commitment and cowardice, which otherwise would be present both philosophically and theologically. Agony and fear of death have not been removed, but Jesus successfully masters them. As Claire Clivaz has pointed out, referring to the story about Philoctetes,[38] it is not fear but complaining or failing to remain silent that is blamable. The Gethsemane prayer in its Johannine version is adjusted according to this standard. Hence, Jesus appears both courageous and consistent in his ministry. Agony is not a fatal objection to the notion of courage, but the cup prayer was.

### 8.3.5 *From Loneliness to Public Proclamation*

What is truly exceptional in John 12:27–33, construed as a Gethsemane scene, is the fact that Jesus' prayer actually receives a heavenly response in analogy to Jesus' confidence in his Father: "I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me" (John 11:42). The fact that Jesus knows in advance the adequate perspective provides a privileged view into this episode. It becomes a proclamation, similar to what occurs in 12:28. Jesus' prayer for glorification is emphatically affirmed: "Father, glorify your name! Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." Jesus is not left alone or without a divine response as in most synoptic traditions. It is notable that the response

37 Kasper Bro Larsen, "Narrative Docetism: Christology and Storytelling in the Gospel of John," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (ed. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 352.

38 See Chapter 4.2.1 of the present study.

is conveyed in public. The solitude of synoptic Gethsemane is replaced here with the presence of a crowd that takes the response to be either thunder or an angelic interference. This turns the scene into proclamation. Hence, Jesus also says that the voice was not for him but for them (v. 30), as in 11:42.

Verse 32 echoes the narrator's comment on the arrest in Gethsemane (18:9), but now Jesus makes the altruistic statement his own. Hence, the narrator in 12:33 adds that in saying so, Jesus explains his death. There is much Gethsemane here, but the obvious difference is that the riddles surrounding that incident in the other gospels are not operative. A heavenly voice provides a behind-the-scenes perspective that has significantly altered the scene, and turns it into proclamation for the assembled multitude.

### 8.3.6 *An Echo of the Lord's Prayer* (*John 12:28*)*?*

In the exegesis of the synoptic versions, we observed that an important subtext in the Gethsemane scene was the Lord's Prayer, through the address "Father," God's will being done, and the issue of temptation. In the Fourth Gospel, all these aspects are negotiated and altered, while other aspects are added, notably the glorification of God's name. A prayer to escape the cup is missing; instead there is a prayer that God's name be glorified (12:29), to which a heavenly response is given and understood by the bystanders as an assisting angel (John 12:29). Only Luke's longer version refers to angelic help in Gethsemane. In Mark's ἀπέχει such assistance is simply denied: God is absent.

According to Raymond E. Brown:

> Verse 28 gives us the Johannine form of the petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be your name." ... The first three petitions in the Lord's Prayer are synonymous, and the first petition has the same general import as the third: "Your will be done," or "May your will come about." As we have pointed out, the parallel in the agony for John's "Glorify your name" is in the "Your will be done" of Matt xxvi 42.[39]

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39 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII* (AB; London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1972). 476. Reference to the Lord's Prayer is also made by Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John Volume Two*, 387. It may be noted that Jesus' High Priestly Prayer (John 17) has some important resemblances to the Lord's Prayer, as pointed out by Carmignac, *Recherches sur le 'Notre Pére,'* 369–71; Wm. O. Walker Jr., "The Lord's Prayer in Matthew and John," *NTS* 28 (1982): 237–56; thus also Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to John* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London: Hendrickson, 2005), 432–34.

This means that the Lord's Prayer resonates here as well, if with some differences. The primary reference is the many passages about "glorification" in John's Gospel (12:23; 7:39; 17:4), a theme that appears in contexts evoking that particular prayer. The prayer that God's will be done, found in the synoptic traditions, is transformed in accordance here with another prayer from the Pater Noster: ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου. An obstacle here is of course that Jesus in John 12:28 says πάτερ, δόξασόν σου τὸ ὄνομά. Although the two verbs are not interchangeable in John's Gospel, it is worth considering a connection. The semantic field of ἁγιάζειν in connection with God's name means to "honour as holy" or to "give reverence to," the Lord's Prayer being its primary example in the New Testament.[40] The background for this is in the Septuagint. Texts such as Isa 29:23, Ezek 36:23, and Ps. 71:19; 102:1; 144:21 demonstrate that glorifying God's name is synonymous with praising his name as holy (ἅγιος). A close analogy is Rev 15:3–4, where δοξάσει τὸ ὄνομά σου has a textual variant reading ἅγιος τὸ ὄνομά σου. It is worth noting that ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου in Matt 6:9 has a contrast in Matt 6:2, about hypocrites whose aim is to be honored by men: δοξασθῶσιν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων. The Lord's Prayer's "hallowed be your name" is therefore presented as precisely the opposite of the δόξα-seeking of hypocrites. Hence, it makes sense to take δοξάζειν and ἁγιάζειν as referring to a similar semantic field when combined with name and honor.

Brown is right to point out that John 12:27–33 is very much about "let your will be done." It is a text about God's plan of salvation through Christ. In this context "glorifying God's name" means that God's plan is to be accomplished, making Jesus' submission a crucial aspect of the text. However, Brown's emphasis on the similarities makes him overlook some fundamental differences; he believes that both versions depict Jesus as both struggling and triumphing. In the synoptic versions, Jesus struggles with the human preference to have the cup pass from him, while in John he struggles with the temptation to cry out to be saved: "... in John he struggles with the temptation to cry out to his Father to save him from the hour."[41] In both scenes he triumphs by submitting to his Father's will. This is true as far as it goes, namely that both agony and submission are important aspects of the Gethsemane story, John's included. Nonetheless, Brown fails to do justice to the fact that the triumph according to John 12 is precisely that Jesus avoids what he does in the Synoptic Gospels. There is hardly any place left for personal anguish questioning the

40 *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains Volume 1* (ed. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida; New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 745–46 (88.27); cf. BDAG s.v.

41 Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII*, 475.

divine agenda in this Johannine scene. The hour-theology of John's Gospel renders impossible any prayer aiming to save Jesus from this very hour, and it follows that temptation is not envisaged in the Johannine scene. The cry for being released from this moment rests very much on the idea that Jesus faces temptations, a theme absent from John's Gospel. Hence, the similarities to the Lord's Prayer in the Johannine scene evolve around "glorifying God's name" and "his will be done," while the temptation, so crucial in the synoptic traditions on Gethsemane, is absent.

## 8.4 John 17: Another Gethsemane Prayer?

We have noted that Gethsemane is reworked throughout the narrative. Furthermore we also saw that John 12:27–33 provides a "fulfilment view" or "behind the scene perspective" on the prayer. These observations pave the way for a renewed look at the relationship between the prayer in ch. 17 and the arrest in Gethsemane that follows. The prayer that chronologically corresponds to the Gethsemane prayer in John's Gospel would be the prayer in ch. 17, but that prayer precedes the arrest and is separated spatially from the garden. It also shows no signs of human weakness or Jesus' dreading his destiny there; on the contrary, "his death is fully affirmed as an event in which both the Father and the Son are glorified (John 17:1–5)."[42]

In his commentary, J. Ramsey Michaels notes with regard to ch. 17 that "to all intents and purposes, he is alone with the Father, just as he was in Gethsemane in the other Gospels when the disciples were asleep."[43] Michaels here motivates a more intense search for the reworking of Gethsemane motives in this prayer. The following observations help establish the provisional case that when Jesus narratively is arrested, he had already completed what the Gethsemane prayer was really about from the Johannine perspective.

The prayer is found within the farewell discourse, with John 16:31–33 forming the backdrop of Jesus' intercessory prayer at the time of bidding his disciples farewell, a backdrop resonating with themes that are readily associated with the Gethsemane scene: "The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me" (v. 32). Here the wider context of Gethsemane as we know it from Mark's Gospel is echoed: the coming of the

42 Cha, "Confronting Death," 248.

43 Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 858. On p. 879 he makes a similar observation with regard to the role of "I want" (θέλω) in John 17:24.

"hour," the disciples being dispersed as they leave Jesus behind alone, and the relationship between Father and Son. The last point is markedly different from Mark, though; there Jesus found himself left alone, which is not so here. Jesus urges them to take courage (θαρσεῖτε), a key notion in Gethsemane discourses as the present study unfolds them. Thus the verses leading up to the prayer suggests proximity to Gethsemane traditions. There are seven major similarities between the prayer in ch. 17 and Gethsemane traditions. Given the Johannine literary style, some of the similarities are suggestive rather than obvious, but they do add up to a conclusion worth considering.

First, the prayer is addressed in solitude to "Father" at the time of the arrival of the "hour" (v. 1) and the theme of unity between Father and Son runs through the prayer (vv. 11, 21–22). Second, the main theme of the prayer is "glorification" (v. 1 cf. 5) and is almost identical with the Gethsemane prayer equivalent found in John's Gospel (12:28, see above). Furthermore, verse 12 echoes the comment made by the narrator in the Gethsemane arrest (18:9). Thus the two scenes in this Gospel that most clearly mirror Gethsemane traditions both come into play. Third, Jesus says "... by finishing (τελειώσας) the work you gave me to do" (v. 4). This is precisely the question around which the synoptic Gethsemane scenes evolve, most clearly stated in Luke's distinctive theology of βουλή. Fourth, the prayer assumes that Jesus' disciples are alienated from the world in which they live (vv. 11,14–15) and find themselves in a struggle or combat. Against a similar background, the Synoptic Gospels unanimously urge the disciples to stay awake. In this prayer the issue of alertness has been altered, as the disciples have been handed over to the protection of Father the himself (vv. 11, 14–15). Admonitions to stay awake become a prayer that Father will protect them.

Fifth, Jesus intercedes for his disciples and for those coming to believe in him (vv. 9, 20), thus making evident that a prophetic perspective is present (cf. John 10:16; 11:52). Intercession did not appear in the synoptic Gethsemane scenes, although it was important in the wider narrative contexts (Luke 22:32). We see later that construing the agony and prayer as intercessions acting on the benefit of others became one important way to cope with the riddles of Gethsemane.[44] Something similar appears to be at work here. From this follows the sixth observation that the prayer reveals the altruistic nature of Jesus' ministry (v. 12); it is for the benefit of others, so his prayer is intercessory. Seventh, the prayer has Jesus say θέλω (v. 24) emphatically, which echoes the question of what Jesus wants and God wills in the Synoptic Gospels. His desire is not for himself and easing his anxiety but for the benefit of the disciples themselves.

44 See Chapter 20.5.2.

His will is that they should "see his glory," which is almost a complete reversal of what the disciples have witnessed in Gethsemane.

When we bring these observations together, we see that the prayer is markedly shaped by Johannine style and theology, but still bears sufficient similarities to the Gethsemane prayer to warrant the claim that this prayer brings out the deepest intentions of that prayer. This is how the Gethsemane prayer appeared retrospectively, in the light of the guidance of the Spirit and Scripture (John 2:22; 12:16; 14:26), and what Jesus really prayed for at Gethsemane. John 17 thus provides a behind-the-scenes perspective similar to John 12:27–33.

Christian Dietzfelbinger argues that John 17 "vom Author als Gegenstück zu Mk 14,35f gedacht ist, durch das das synoptische Gethsemanegebet ersetzt werden soll."[45] According to Dietzfelbinger, John 12:27–28 and 18:1–11 represent "die originale johanneische Interpretation jenes Gebets von Mk 14,35f vor uns." The prayer in John 17, however, is not an interpretation of the synoptic tradition, but instead its challenge, its opposite, or its replacement: "Also liegen zwei Arten des Umgangs mit der Gethsemane vor, die nicht aufeinander abgestimmt sind, die also schwerlich aus *einer* Hand stammen."[46] The question of the Fourth Gospel's redaction is indeed difficult and surpasses what the present study addresses. Suffice it to say here that Dietzfelbinger proceeds almost exclusively from the placement of the prayer in ch. 17. The fact that the prayer is found where the Gethsemane prayer might well be expected is his point of departure. My presentation has demonstrated that the knowledge of Gethsemane traditions, even within ch. 17 alone, goes far beyond that. The deep transformations at work in the Fourth Gospel are reduced when Dietzfelbinger says that John 17 is not an interpretation but only a replacement. This replacement is necessary due to the thoroughgoing reworking of traditions an insider's view or the perspective of fulfillment.

This prayer is certainly less about Jesus and agony; in fact, the agony is absent here. What we have is a prayer elaborating extensively on the short prayer John 12:28, where the agony is present. These two prayers together represent what the Fourth Gospel makes out of the Gethsemane prayer, and now guide us to see how Gethsemane is more widely diffused in the rest of the Gospel.

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45 Christian Dietzfelbinger, *Der Abschied des Kommenden: Eine Auslegung der johanneischen Abschiedsreden* (WUNT 95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 256; see also pp. 343–44.

46 Dietzfelbinger, *Der Abschied*, 344.

## 8.5 Gethsemane Dispersed

### 8.5.1 *Jung-Sik Cha*

We have seen that traditions from the Synoptic Gospels at times appear without warning and considerably altered in John's Gospel. Jung-Sik Cha is right to note that elements from the synoptic Gethsemane stories are present in the Fourth Gospel, though not condensed into one story unit. They are diffused through various settings, "going through a series of literary expansion and theological correction as they are found irreconcilable with the author's theological and editorial principles."[47] This observation invites several considerations on how Gethsemane may have been transformed, beyond the passages discussed above, in the Fourth Gospel.

Cha has made some observations worth pondering.[48] He points out that Jesus' solitary retreat in Gethsemane, his solitude, and the sleeping disciples find echoes, with alterations, in John's Gospel. Cha refers to John 16:32 ("The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me")[49] and 14:31c ("Rise, let us be on our way"), which in verbatim Greek bring to mind what Jesus says to the disciples in Gethsemane according to the synoptic tradition. Furthermore, Cha says that the intimate relationship between Jesus and the disciples (John 15:1–6) reverses what happened in Gethsemane. Finally, Jesus' concern about his own fate has in John's Gospel given way to his concern and prayer for his disciples in a hostile world (John 17).

Although I do not find all of Cha's transformations equally convincing, it is worth his having raised this question. I do find his point on John's creativity relevant and helpful in approaching John's use of Gethsemane traditions in particular. The analogies or reversals claimed by Cha are, however, too loosely connected to Gethsemane to really convince the reader. Admittedly, John invites suggestive readings more than of his counterparts, but more investigation is nonetheless necessary to support some of Cha's claims.

### 8.5.2 *"Hour"*

In Cha's spirit, I make these observations. First, the "hour" has become a perspective on the entire ministry of Jesus, concentrated on his death, resurrection, and glorification. This idea looms large in John chs. 2–13, culminating in

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47 Cha, "Confronting Death," 243.

48 Cha, "Confronting Death," 249–52.

49 Cha, "Confronting Death," 250 erroneously gives John 16:36 here; see also my use of that passage as a backdrop for the prayer in ch. 17 above.

chs. 12–13, where the first Gethsemane allusion is also found. To be sure, the "hour" is unique to the Fourth Gospel, but if it coincides with anything in the Synoptics, it must be Mark 14:35 with the cup prayer that the "hour" may pass from him and in Jesus' saying (Mark 14:41; Matt 26:45) that "the hour" has come, thus recognizing that the cup prayer has found no response.[50]

### 8.5.3 *Night*

Second, the role of Judas and "night" in chs. 12–13 is worth observing. In the Synoptic Gospels, Judas' closing in on Jesus does the work of the devil as stated explicitly in Luke 22:3 but also implied in the relationship to the first temptation scene. According to John's Gospel, Jesus is up to the struggle with Satan (12:31; 13:2). The statement of 12:31 about Jesus casting out the devil is intimately connected with Gethsemane motifs from 12:27 on. Furthermore, the night is important in the Synoptic Gospels; the scene takes place at night, and the metaphors of sleeping and staying awake revolve around this motif. In John 12:34–50, which follows immediately upon John's Gethsemane scene, this motif comes into play and culminates in 13:30 as Judas leaves the room for his betrayal.[51] By no means all references to darkness in John's Gospel are hidden allusions to Gethsemane, but the appearance of night within chs. 12–13, connected with the role of Judas the betrayer, cannot be ignored.

### 8.5.4 *John 14:31c*

Third is the enigmatic John 14:31c (ἐγείρεσθε ἄγωμεν ἐντεῦθεν: "rise, let us be on our way") that disturbs the flow of reading and has thus bothered scholars and caused elaborate source theories that strive to find an adequate meaning within the parameters of Gethsemane. Mark and Matthew render this sentence identically and it marks a dramatic shift in their stories. Jesus and the disciples are about to embark upon a new stage, with this sentence introducing the transition. Luke has no such phrasing, but 22:35–36 is very much about the shift that Gethsemane and the passion will bring to discipleship.

In John, this sentence introduces the shift in perspective from the time Jesus was among his disciples to his absence from them, which is portrayed in the farewell speech (chs. 14–16). These chapters introduce the future of discipleship once Jesus is no longer around (14:18–19, 25–26, 28–30; 16:1–24), thus also

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50 This is also pointed out by Gilbert van Belle, "The Death of Jesus and the Literary Unity of the Fourth Gospel," in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (BETL 200; ed. G. van Belle; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), 39.

51 For this Johannine motif, see Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 141–73.

forming a bridge to texts that speak about the disciples of the future (10:16; 11:52; 17:20–21; 20:29).[52] Furthermore, this sentence has to be read within the setting of 14:27–33,[53] where the text speaks from the perspective of a struggle between the disciples and the world. Courage is contrasted with cowardice (μὴ ταρασσέσθω ὑμῶν ἡ καρδία μη δὲδειλιάτω; v. 27), a contrast crucial to the Gethsemane discourse that this study uncovers. The submission to the Father's will is clearly stated, as is the fact that the "ruler of the world is coming," which echoes the coming of Judas in the Gethsemane traditions. Taken together these observations suggest that Gethsemane traditions are recast here.

### 8.5.5 *Elusive Jesus*

Finally, before the "hour," Jesus frequently escapes death and the plans to have him killed. Jesus' wish to escape death finds unexpected echoes in the larger narrative. Mark W.G. Stibbe has presented a fascinating narrative reading of John's Gospel, in which he argues that Christ is consciously and consistently depicted as elusive.[54] This contributes to the mysterious nature of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. Stibbe distinguishes four motifs from which he draws one unified theme of how the author characterizes Jesus: withdrawal at times of danger (death-retreat), escape, secret movements, and geographical confusion. Not all of Stibbe's claims are equally convincing and it is not at all clear that they make up one single motif in John's story.

Furthermore, withdrawal and escape cannot be easily distinguished. Both represent Jesus' avoiding the plans to have him killed before the arrival of "the hour": "So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself (ἐκρύβη) and went out of the temple" (John 8:59). Similar movements to escape from

52 Frey, "Das Vierte Evangelium," 86–93 and Cha, "Confronting Death," 251 mention John 14:31c, but none of them develop it in depth. The enigmatic John 20:17 ("Do not hold on to me") is likely a sentence working similarly, indicating a new stage in discipleship. Fellowship with Jesus is now to be sought not in his physical presence but in the community of believers, as indicated by Jesus' urging the woman to find the brothers; see Reimund Bieringer, "'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God' (John 20:17): Resurrection and Ascension in the Gospel of John," in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (WUNT 222; ed. Craig R. Koester and Reimund Bieringer; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 209–35.

53 According to Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 797–98, this scene bears a striking resemblance to the synoptic accounts of Jesus and his sleeping disciples in Gethsemane. Michaels does not take note of the role of the language of manly courage in that passage.

54 Mark W.G. Stibbe, "The Elusive Christ: A New Reading of the Fourth Gospel," *JSNT* 44 (1991): 19–37.

being seized occur frequently in the story.[55] It is of course relevant to note that one of these texts (12:36) is narratively linked to the passage in which so much of the Gethsemane scene is echoed and transformed.

According to Stibbe, the elusiveness of Christ mirrors different traditions, primarily wisdom in the Old Testament and the Messianic Secret in Mark's Gospel. His explanation of the background of this Johannine motif does not take into account the fact that Jesus' withdrawal and escape is always attached to the plans to have him killed. Neither of the background texts to which he refers have that particular emphasis, even though this is where Gethsemane traditions might come into play, since the cup prayer is tantamount to an attempt to get away.

In 12:27 John has reworked motifs found in the Synoptic Gospels. The story of the Fourth Gospel reaches its turning point as the hour is unfolded in chs. 11–13.[56] It is a special feature of this story that the hour brings the dramatic change: "Then they tried to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come" (John 7:30). The arrest scene to which John 18:11 belongs brings out this change narratively: "I told you that I am He. So if you are looking for me, let these men go" (John 18:8). The Gethsemane prayer is thus reworked and altered according to the soteriological implications of the hour. From the arrival of the hour, John does not depict Jesus as making any attempt to elude death at all.

This narrative shift is also mirrored in John 11:1–8, where Jesus acknowledges that there is no longer time for him to stay behind in order to avoid death. The death of a friend (John 11:11) now calls upon his presence, risky though it is. Jesus comes forward, running the risk of losing his life for this friend (11:53). Lazarus returns to life at the cost of Jesus' life. Thus John 11 becomes a narrative unfolding of Jesus' laying down his life for a friend (John 15:13).[57] Until this point, however, Jesus was hiding from those who eventually caused his death. The hiding motif brings to mind Luke 4:30, but it is certainly used more

55 John 7:10, 30, 44; 8:20; 10:39; 11:53–54; 12:36.

56 See John 11:53; 12:23, 27; 13:1. The so-called "Book of Signs" (chs. 2–12) coincides with this turning point in the story.

57 On the ideal of dying for a friend, see Karl Olav Sandnes, *A New Family: Conversion and Ecclesiology in the Early Church with Cross cultural Comparisons* (Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity 91; Bern: Peter Lang, 1994), 86–90, 171–75. According to Gail R. O'Daly, "Jesus as Friend in the Gospel of John," *Int* 58 (2004): 150, the "pattern of Jesus' own life and death moves the teaching of John 15:13 from the realm of abstraction to an embodied promise and gift." For more extensive presentations of friendship in John's Gospel, see Martin M. Culy, *Echoes of Friendship in the Gospel of John* (New Testament Monographs 30; Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2010); on John 15:13 in particular, see pp. 157–66.

profoundly in John's Gospel. Jesus' hiding implies that Jesus until the hour did everything to prevent his death, hoping to evade it. In these instances, John has transformed memories of the cup prayer, which is the nub of the escape prayer.

## 8.6 Summing Up

The story of Jesus at prayer in Gethsemane is missing from the Gospel of John, or more accurately there is no place left for it. Only the arrest is there, turned into a majestic scene of a theophany, where a prayer to escape is inappropriate. While the Synoptic Gospels witness a process whereby the second part of the prayer ("not mine but *Your* will be done") was emphasized, John takes yet another step by removing the cup prayer. Jesus does not find himself tempted to pray for his escape. The unity between Father and Son, so fundamental to John's story, rules out any possibility that Jesus would desire relief from his mission. Scraps from the Gethsemane traditions are found, though, and are significant enough to be noted. They are diffused in various settings, caught up in a theological rewriting of the traditions in the light of the hour.

Jesus is not affected by his agony so as to seek a way out. Many scholars jump to conclusions in assuming that the agony has simply been suppressed, but the agony implied in John 12:27 concurs with passages where Jesus is emotionally stirred and even terrified. The text that comes closest to his fear in Gethsemane is John 13:21, where he is terrified (ἐταράχθη) at the prospect of his own betrayal. This is also the term by which Jesus is portrayed in John 12:27: "Now my soul is troubled." These emotions are not primarily psychological in nature,[58] but reflect Jesus' knowledge of the cosmic and soteriological dimensions of what he will have to go through. His emotions are thus incorporated into his ministry at large.

It is the prayer to escape the hour that really calls for rethinking in the light of the Fourth Gospel. John turns the prayer into the rhetorical question of whether Jesus should consider being dismissed, which is to be answered negatively. A prayer to have the cup pass from him is unthinkable. Nonetheless, this element may have formed the background of the narrative motif of Jesus' hiding or acting elusively and thus escaping the plans to have him killed, until the hour has come. Once that occurs, no room is left for such a prayer. The prayer in John 17 picks up on the Gethsemane prayer but provides an insider's perspective. Gethsemane comes into play in this prayer by suggesting that this is

58 Thus Cha, "Confronting Death," 244.

how John's Gospel comes to terms with the prayer, turning it into intercession. In so doing, John accords with several later interpreters in the church.

The way John's Gospel approaches the Gethsemane tradition about Jesus' prayer finds an echo in John Colet's arguments against Erasmus in the Oxford disputation that serves as the beginning of this study.[59] Colet said that Jesus' prayer, if not interpreted as his altruistic concern for the disciples, for Judas, and for the Jews runs contrary to the love that brought him to the world (John 3:16), thus betraying the purpose of his ministry. Colet's ideas find resonance in some church fathers as well[60] and echo a moral philosophical critique found already in antiquity. This view would, if Jesus sought escape, point out a lack of consistency between life and word, between saying and doing, between claim and performance. Such criticism by its very nature attacks the moral consistency of a person. Neither of these observations becomes an issue in the Gospel of John, but his story appears driven by similar philosophical and theological considerations. Jesus is portrayed as committed to his ministry and death throughout, without a moment of wavering.

Compared to the ideal of facing death nobly, the agony of the Johannine version is a situation calling for courageous mastery. Jesus faced his death in accordance with his ministry generally: "Rather than expressing anguish, the Johannine Jesus faces death with the strength and courage of a superhero."[61] I concur with Colleen M. Conway in that view, but I do not deny that Jesus shows some anguish in 12:27. In this way the Fourth Gospel separates itself from the other canonical gospels. Jörg Frey points out that Jesus' voluntary and victorious death for the benefit of others makes his death noble according to ancient standards as described by Jerome H. Neyrey.[62] In his article on the "Noble Shepherd," Neyrey demonstrates that the Good (καλός)[63] Shepherd reflects the idea of noble death, with an emphasis on dying for the benefit

59 See Chapter 1.1 of the present study.

60 See the chapters covering the post-apostolic discourse in the present study.

61 Colleen M. Conway, "'Behold the Man!' Masculine Christology and the Fourth Gospel" in *New Testament Masculinities* (Semeia Studies 45; ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 173; see also Colleen M. Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 147.

62 See the introductory chapter to the present study.

63 Plato's dialogue *Laches* on manly courage associates ἡ ἀνδρεία with καλός; sometimes including ἀγαθός. There is no doubt, however, that the term for the nobility characteristic of manly courage is καλός and its cognates. The opposite of this term is τὸ αἰσχρόν; see *Lach.* 180c; 182c; 186a–c; 192c; 193d; 200d.

of others.[64] This observation unites the four gospels in one significant aspect of masculinity. However, neither Neyrey nor Frey observes the importance of consistency in this regard, to which John is the only Gospel witness.[65] This strengthens the impression that Jesus is manly throughout.

64 See Chapter 1.4 of the present study.

65 Jörg Frey, "Edler Tod—Wirksamer Tod—Stellvertretender Tot—Heilschaffender Tot: Zur Narrativen und Theologischen Deutung des Todes Jesu im Johannesevangelium," in *The Death Of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (BETL 200; ed. Gilbert van Belle; Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2007), 71–76.

CHAPTER 9

# "With Loud Cries and Tears": Heb 5:7–9 and Gethsemane

This passage in Hebrews is notoriously difficult, as problems attach to any interpretation offered. The prayers of Jesus that are mentioned are more allusive than precise when it comes to identifying their referents. The text certainly lacks in specificity but still claims to be rooted in Jesus' life in the flesh. Hence, this passage is frequently talked of as a conundrum in Hebrews. This characterization is connected with questions that are at the center of the present chapter. What did Jesus pray for or about? What was the content of this prayer? Does the text refer to a particular prayer in the Jesus tradition, with most likely candidates his prayer in Gethsemane or on the cross (Mark 15:34, 37; Matt 27:46, 50; Luke 23:46)? What does it mean that his prayers, according to 5:7, were heard (εἰσακουσθεὶς)? If the garden scene is included here, what role does it play and, ultimately, what does Hebrews bring to our search for how this scene was being interpreted and applied? Certainly, these questions are intertwined, and cannot be dealt with separately.

## 9.1 Recent Suggestions

One likely reason for the abundant attention shown to this passage is that we have here an unmistaken reference to historical prayers of Jesus (at least as assumed by the author) and familiar to the audience, although the reference is elusive. "In the days of his flesh" makes it natural to raise the question of what this actually refers to in the life of Jesus. My interpretation naturally owes much to previous attempts, but also sets itself against some of the suggestions made. Hence, a presentation of the most important recent suggestions follows.

### 9.1.1 *Harold W. Attridge*

Harold W. Attridge's commentary in the Hermenia series is a point of departure, since it has proven especially helpful in furthering the debate.[1] According

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1 Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary* (Hermeneia: A Critical & Historical Commentary on the Bible. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989); see also his "'Heard Because of His Reverence' (Heb 5:7)," *JBL* 98 (1979): 90–93.

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to Attridge, the "portrait is vaguely reminiscent of Gethsemane and has often been taken to be an allusion to the story of Christ's agony."[2] In his view, this interpretation faces two major problems. None of the synoptic accounts mentions "loud cries and tears"; nor is it easy to see how Jesus' prayer to avoid death was "heard," as this text claims. Attridge is therefore reserved about a possible connection to Gethsemane traditions as we know them from the gospels, although "it may derive from some divergent Gethsemane tradition."[3] Finally, he argues that the prepositional phrase ἐκ θανάτου in 5:7 is ambiguous. Did Jesus ask for deliverance *from* impending death or *out of* the realm of death through resurrection? Attridge finds the latter more likely, supported by Ps 22:25, which is echoed here. Hence, the hearing of Jesus' prayer refers to his exaltation or resurrection.[4] In his conclusion, Attridge is critical of advocates of a Gethsemane interpretation that holds that "Jesus was heard" refers to the manifestation of God's will: "Such an interpretation might salvage an allusion to Gethsemane, but it is artificial and unnecessary."[5]

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2 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 148. The reluctance to see Gethsemane behind this text is stated by Victor C. Pfitzner, *Hebrews* (Abingdon New Testament Commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 92–93; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* (WBC 47a; Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 120; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews* (AB36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 106–107, and most strongly David deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude. A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews,"* Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans: 2000, 189–190. He says that there is a strong "temptation" to identify Heb 5:7 with the account of Gethsemane in the Synoptic Gospels, which must be "resisted." The hesitation of these scholars to see Gethsemane as forming a background is of course, a witness to the fact that many scholars refer to Gethsemane when commenting upon this text in Hebrews; see for example Donald Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 84–85; Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetoric Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude*, (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 2007), 200–201; Peter O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010), 198. All hold Gethsemane to be the most illustrating example implied here. According to Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* (tr. Robert R. Barr; Grand Rapids Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 271, Heb 5:7–8 illustrates how deeply concerned the primitive church was about this scene from Jesus' life. Christopher Richardson, "The Passion: Reconsidering Hebrews 5.7–8," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts* (ed. Richard Bauckham, Daniel Driver, Trevor Hart, and Nathan MacDonald. LNTS 387; London, New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 52 turns against this view, which he calls "the reigning consensus." Richardson's contribution has now appeared in his *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith: Jesus' Faith as the Climax of Israel's History in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (WUNT 2.338; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2012), 74–89.

3 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 148.

4 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 150.

5 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 150.

### 9.1.2 *James Swetnam*

James Swetnam finds it incompatible with the theology of Hebrews that Jesus begs for his future resurrection; in the rest of this epistle he appears positive and confident. Within this theology there is simply no place for the idea that Jesus perfected his sense of obedience.[6] Swetnam finds this Christology disturbing, thus reminding us of a constant challenge with regard to the Gethsemane tradition, regardless of whether this particular passage is connected to it.[7] Swetnam's point of departure is that καίπερ ὢν υἱός (although he was a son) is to be taken with what precedes it, not the following verse 8, as happens in almost all contemporary day interpretations.[8] This syntactical question is thus crucial for his reading. The plea mentioned here has only Ps 22 (21):25 (see below) rather than Gethsemane as its principal source, and its content is that Jesus asks to die rather than to avoid death. It is a plea that divine intervention should *not* take place, as through Elijah or some other assisting figure. Jesus' being "heard" is the fact that he was allowed to die, son though he was. Isaac was freed from death; God provided another solution (Gen 22). Jesus, on the contrary, prayed that something similar should *not* occur in his case.[9]

Swetnam's interpretation ignores the rhetoric in which Heb 5:7 is embedded; furthermore he also imports too many ideas, like the *tôdâ* ceremony and the Lord's Supper, into the exegesis. Swetnam is correct that καίπερ in the New Testament, even in Hebrews, refers to what precedes is statistically more likely, but there are numerous examples elsewhere where it does introduce a sentence,[10] as this specific context certainly favors.[11] Swetnam ignores the language of development through *paideia* that is implied here. Furthermore,

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6 James Swetnam, "The Crux of Hebrews 5,7–8," *Bib* 81 (2000): 347–61.

7 I see καίπερ as bringing out precisely the tension between the identity of Jesus as Son of God in Hebrews and his solidarity and identification with his followers. In the words of Erich Grässer, *An die Hebräer* (*Hebr 1–6*) (EKK XVII/; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger/Neukirchener, 1990), 295: "Dieser mit der Konzessivkonjunktion καίπερ eingeleitete Nebensatz unterstreicht die Nichtselbstverständlichkeit der im Hauptsatz gemachten Aussage. Seiner Würde als Sohn zum Trotz wurde Jesus in eine Leidensschule genommen, in der es sogar für ihn, nein: gerade für ihn etwas zu lernen gab. Das war die Einübung in die Solidarität mit den Brudern."

8 Swetnam is followed by deSilva, *Perseverance*, 192.

9 Swetnam, "Crux," 355–56.

10 Joachim Jeremias, "Hebräer 5,7–10," in *Abba: Studien zur Neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte* (ed. Joachim Jeremias; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 320.

11 Feldmeier, *Krisis*, 59–60 rightly points out that καίπερ marks a contrast to Heb 5:5–6 on the elevated status of Jesus.

neither Ps 22 nor the role of Isaac in Hebrews justifies this reading;[12] there is no indication in Ps 22 that the speaker wants to die.

### 9.1.3 *Christopher Richardson*

Christopher Richardson agrees that a historical reference is intended, but asserts that it is not Gethsemane, but Golgotha or the cross. Although many scholars would hardly urge a contrast between the two, Richardson tends in that direction: "Rather than evoking Jesus' *Angst* in Gethsemane, or conflating images of Gethsemane and Golgotha, the author has fixed his comments into a larger discussion of priesthood and sacrifice (4.14–5.10) that enables the audience to compare Jesus' priesthood, actions and status with those of Aaron and Melchizedek."[13] The focus of the whole letter is the cross, including this disputed passage. It is the suffering as such that is the temptation, as implied by Heb 11:17.[14] Cries and tears are "entirely absent from the synoptic accounts."[15] Furthermore, the loud and powerful voice finds analogies in the Passion Narratives.[16] Jesus does not pray to be rescued from the impending death, but for being raised from death.[17] As a consequence, Jesus being "heard" refers to this resurrection. The perfection culminates in the resurrection that brought him into the heavenly sanctuary. Golgotha was the place of Jesus' final testing and the place where he offered high priestly supplications both for himself and the people.[18]

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12 For a critique see also Claire Clivaz, "Hebrews 5.7, Jesus' Prayer on the Mount of Olives and Jewish Christianity: Hearing Early Christian Voices in Canonical and Apocryphal Texts," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts* (ed. Richard Bauckham, Daniel Driver, Trevor Hart, and Nathan MacDonald. LNTS 387; London, New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 191–92.

13 Richardson, "The Passion," 52.

14 This is at best indirect evidence. This particular passage is also important for Swetnam, who argues that this text proves that the temptation (πειραζόμενος) refers to the Aqedah and Isaac, but he overlooks that the testing here refers to Abraham rather than Isaac.

15 Richardson, "The Passion," 53.

16 Richardson, "The Passion," 54.

17 It is worth noting that Richardson considers it improbable that the author would speak of Christ's attempting to avoid his suffering and death, since that would run contrary to his own theology (p. 61). Such a comment applies equally to the Synoptic Gospels, serving as a reminder that the Gethsemane tradition was and is a stumbling block in the narrative accounts. Hence, the simple fact of tension pointed out by Richardson is hardly a valid argument.

18 Richardson, "The Passion," 67.

Richardson puts his finger on a key issue when he points to Golgotha. Nonetheless, I find his contrast between Gethsemane and Golgotha exaggerated and worth examining (see below). Richardson starts his contribution by pointing out that the language of this passage is evocative rather than referential in a specific sense: "Rather than being dependent on a single source, the author seems immersed among multiple sources that are centered on the themes of suffering and pious devotion to God."[19] The story is manipulated, deviating from the "normative versions of the crucifixion."[20] Hence, Golgotha is here depicted as "altogether unique."[21] In spite of these observations, Richardson is sure that Gethsemane cannot be included alongside Golgotha, leaving a tension in his paper between flexibility and specificity. Richardson not only prefers Golgotha but actually *excludes* Gethsemane. This is a contrast that differs markedly from how the garden incident was made sense of in much of early Christianity.[22]

Finally, it is worth noting how little attention his paper gives to the aspect of testing in this passage. In my view, Richardson's interpretation does not come to terms with the way Hebrews 5 brings together prayer and testing; any interpretation of the chapter has to grapple with precisely that connection. The passion certainly accounts for some aspects of this passage, but testing or temptation as a display of how to face weakness (Heb 4:14–16) is not really addressed in the Passion Narrative, and Gethsemane accounts for precisely that. Furthermore, scholars have scarcely noted that Jesus' prayer in Heb 5:7 is addressed πρὸς τὸν δυνάμενον, which echoes Gethsemane traditions as they appear most clearly in Mark 14:35 (εἰ δυνατόν ἐστιν) and 14:36 (πάντα δυνατά σοι), with parallels in Matthew.

### 9.1.4 *Claire Clivaz*

Claire Clivaz addresses the passage in question from the perspective of how the Gethsemane prayer was received in Jewish Christianity.[23] Her position owes much to Attridge's 1979 article, which argues that Jesus in Heb 5:7 is patterned according to "the ideal prayer of a pious man as that was understood in Hellenistic Judaism."[24] He refers to Philo's *Her*. 1–29 where Moses in particular

19 Richardson, "The Passion," 60. See also p. 51.

20 Richardson, "The Passion," 60.

21 Richardson, "The Passion," 59.

22 The present study proves beyond any doubt that one of the major interpretational moves was to see Gethsemane and Golgotha as forming a pair.

23 Claire Clivaz, "Hebrews 5.7."

24 Attridge, "'Heard,' " 90.

is presented as a petitioner approaching God with frankness, boldness, and with emotions running high. Philo mentions prayers with a louder cry (μετὰ κραυγῆς μείζονος ἐκβοᾶν, *Her*. 14). Furthermore, praying that way is a sign of courage (ἐθάρρησεν, *Her*. 20). This is echoed in Heb 3:6 and 4:16, leading up to the passage in question, thus indicating that the prayers of Abraham and Moses "are precisely those which appear in the context of Heb 5:7."[25] Attridge shows that there is a tradition of Israel's pious beseeching of God with tears and a loud voice.[26] For Patrick Gray, this piety of the petitioner represents the godly fear that εὐλάβεια denotes here.[27]

Clivaz departs from this point, observing that prayer with cries and tears refers largely to prayers for the salvation of Israel in times of danger. She refers to 4 Ezra, where the prophet weeps over and laments the destiny of *Israel* (6:35; 8:15–19). Such intense prayers are effective and aimed primarily at the preservation of Israel, God's people. Clivaz rejects suggestions that the content of the prayer in Heb 5:7 is about resurrection;[28] as it is analogous with prayers for the salvation of Israel, it is thus a prayer for others. Such an interpretation is witnessed to in later extra-canonical sources. Hence, Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane came to be interpreted as his supplication for his own people of the flesh, somewhat analogous to Paul in Romans 9–11.[29] According to Clivaz, Heb 5:7 paves the way for such interpretations.

Clivaz' suggestion is fascinating; there is no doubt that Jesus' high priestly office includes intercessionary prayer. Nonetheless, Clivaz fails to come to terms with some important elements. First, a prayer for the people of Israel, or for others, can only be inferred from extra-biblical sources and does not emerge from Hebrews itself. Esau's prayer (Heb 12:17 echoing *QG* 4.233) is not an intercession for others. External sources prevail in Clivaz' exegesis of Hebrews, and she also blurs the paradigmatic use of Jesus' prayer in Hebrews. Jesus is portrayed in Heb 5:7–9 with an eye to the situation of the addressees, who find themselves weak and tempted and who are urged to approach God in prayer. It is not evident how a prayer for others works rhetorically within a passage aimed at presenting Jesus as familiar with temptation. Taken together with Heb 4:14–16, the passage in question is at home in another discourse.

25 Attridge, "'Heard,'" 93.

26 See also 2 Macc 11:6; 3 Macc 1:16; 5:7, 25; *Deus* 115; *QG* 4,233.

27 Patrick Gray, *Godly Fear: The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Greco-Roman Critiques of Superstition* (SBL Academia Biblica 16; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 200–205.

28 *Pace* Jeremias, "Hebräer 5,7–10," 321; Attridge, "'Heard,'" 91; Gray, *Godly Fear*, 192.

29 See Chapters 13.2.1 and 18.1 in the present study.

Clivaz argues that Heb 5:7–9 is not in fact a reference to Gethsemane. She substantiates her view with two arguments. First, she notes that Theodore of Mopsuestia in his refutation of Julian was the first to combine the two. She says that even John Chrysostom opposed such a connection (*Hom. Heb*. 8 on Hebrews 5).[30] Clivaz correctly points out that the reception history before Theodore appears wanting as to Gethsemane and Heb 5:7–10 forming a pair. Her second argument is simply an extension of her interpretation that Heb 5:7 is an intercessory prayer that does not apply to Gethsemane.[31] The power of this argument depends entirely on the veracity of her interpretation; once that is disputed, the argument is fatally weakened.

## 9.2 Heb 5:7–9 from a Passion Perspective

This is one of the most vivid portrayals of Jesus' humanity in the New Testament. The most crucial part of this text goes like this:

> In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission" (ἐν ἡμέραις τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ δεήσεις τε καὶ ἱκετηρίας…σῴζειν αὐτὸν ἐκ θανάτου μετὰ κραυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς καὶ δακρύων προσενέγκας καὶ εἰσακουσθεὶς ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας, v. 7).

This undoubtedly refers to the earthly Jesus, as the parallel with 2:14 suggests: "Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood (κεκοινώνηκεν αἵματος καὶ σαρκός), he himself likewise (παραπλησίως) shared the same things." Furthermore, Heb 5:8–9 echoes 2:10, which speaks about Jesus being perfected through sufferings (διὰ παθημάτων τελειῶσαι), thus strengthening the links between the two passages. The solidarity implied here finds its most striking expression in Heb 4:15–16:

30 Clivaz, *L'Ange et la sueur de sang*, 512. I find her comment on that particular text misleading, since Chrysostom quotes from Matthew about Jesus' distress and the cup prayer and combines this with his prayer to be saved from death in Heb 5 (PG 63.69a): "Tell me now, did He pray the Father that He might be saved from death? And was it for this cause ( διὰ τοῦτο) that he was 'exceeding sorrowful, and said, If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me'?" (NPNF 14:404). An affirmative answer is expected. Furthermore, there is a possibility that Origen in *Cels*. 1.69, where he connects Jesus as "the great wrestler (ἀγωνιστής)" with Heb 4:15, has Heb 5:7–10 in mind, but that is necessarily guesswork.

31 Clivaz, *L'Ange et la sueur de sang*, 603–607, 612.

> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses (συμπαθῆσαι ταῖς ἀσθενείαις ἡμῶν), but we have one who in every respect has been tested (πεπειρασμένον) as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The high priestly office of Jesus elsewhere in Hebrews is primarily depicted in terms of his atoning sin. However, this description is not exclusive of other aspects, as it also includes supplication (Heb 7:25; 9:24). Jesus' priestly office runs the gamut from his solidarity with human beings (Heb 2:14–18)[32] to his death and his heavenly intercession. To restrict it narrowly to his death is simply not supported by the actual content of Hebrews.[33] His heavenly intercession is trustworthy because of the solidarity he has shown with humanity's weaknesses during his earthly lifetime, and his general solidarity with us is thus absorbed into his priestly office to bring salvation. It is precisely from such a perspective that the prayer in 5:7–9 comes into play. Ole Jakob Filtvedt has recently pointed out how intimately Heb 5:7–9 is connected to the high priestly office of Jesus:

> The prayers of Jesus thus bear witness to the fact that he shares in the conditions of the people. The very fact *that* Jesus prayed to God concerning his own situation, and the fact that he had something to bear forth on his own behalf, provides a point of identification between Jesus and those for whom he ministers.[34]

It is striking how the prayers and supplications of Jesus in 5:7 are being "offered" (προσενέγκας), thus echoing what Heb 5:1, 3 says about the high priest (προσφέρειν). As a matter of fact, the entire discussion of Jesus' high priestly office resonates in Hebrews 8–10, including the prayers from ch. 5. There are numerous occurrences of προσφέρειν in this part of the letter, which has repercussions on how the author views the prayers in question here. It follows naturally from this that Heb 5:7–9 places these prayers firmly within the theology of

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32 "Likewise" (παραπλησίως, Heb 2:14) is to be given weight here, and comes into play in the rhetoric in which Heb 5:7–10 is embedded.

33 *Pace* Richardson, "The Passion."

34 Ole Jakob Filtvedt, "With Our Eyes Fixed on Jesus: The Prayers of Jesus and His Followers in Hebrews," in *Early Christian Prayer and Identity Formation* (ed. Reidar Hvalvik and Karl Olav Sandnes; WUNT 336; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 165.

passion and atonement. In fact, verse 10 about his high priestly office according with Melchizedek makes that evident.

Three important things follow from what has just been noted. First, the prayers "with loud cries and tears" somehow refer to traditions about Jesus' earthly ministry. Furthermore, in asking precisely what prayers are referred to, we must take into consideration that Hebrews includes these prayers in a wider passion perspective, thus making any search for specificities more difficult. Finally, from the observation that 5:7–9 is deeply embedded in the high priestly theology of Hebrews, Richardson draws the conclusion that these prayers can only be at home in the Passion Narrative. However, Richardson equates the theology of the Passion Narrative with its account or story. The high priestly theology actually paves the way for exploring how Gethsemane may fit into this epistle, not for simply excluding it.

### 9.2.1 *A Text Considerably Shaped*

There is no doubt that the Greek vocabulary of the relevant passage in Hebrews 5 is taken neither from the gospels' Gethsemane stories nor from the Passion Narratives. John Chrysostom states this very clearly in his *Homily* 8 on Hebrews 5, but nevertheless develops the passage from the Gethsemane scene.[35] Whatever position is taken as to the prayers' precise referents, it is obvious that either other sources, manipulation, paraphrasis, scriptural interpretation, or a combination thereof have left their mark on it.

I have argued that the story of Jesus' agony in the garden of Gethsemane shows signs of being handed down in a form that recalls *chreia* practices.[36] That genre was prone to develop, alter, and paraphrase those traditions as they were passed down. Flexibility within a pattern is characteristic of the process of learning this practice in antiquity.[37] The terminological discrepancies pointed out by Attridge and others are therefore inconclusive as signs of divergent traditions, because such comparisons assume a fixed and stable tradition. Alterations may simply represent the rhetorical elaborations characteristic of *chreia* exercises.

I think David deSilva misses the point when he argues from the assumption that if Gethsemane is echoed, it must be "precisely in the sense this was portrayed in Gethsemane."[38] There is not much evidence that this was the way

35 See Chapter 17.1 of the present study.

36 See Chapter 5.8.1 of the present study.

37 Sandnes, *The Gospel 'According to Homer and Virgil,'* 30–41.

38 DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 190. Kevin B. McCruden, "The Concept of Perfection in the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Reading the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Resource for Students* (ed. Eric

traditions were preserved among early Christians; taking into account ancient educational practices actually favors flexibility in this regard.[39] The very fact that Heb 5:7 mentions prayers and supplications in the plural is itself indicative of a somewhat loose connection to specificities; a given incident might become representative and thus take on a wider reference.[40] Different factors within a continuum contributed to this flexibility. In this particular text it is obvious that scripture is one of the factors by which the passage is shaped. For obvious reasons this also makes the text somewhat shadowy when it comes to identifying any implied incident. The following presents some key texts, demonstrating how deeply the vocabulary of the passage in question is embedded into biblical phraseology.

Nestle-Aland's 28th edition cites Ps 22:25 in the margin here and Heb 2:12 cites that psalm. It is therefore natural to start from Ps 21LXX:

> Ps 21:3 (22:2): ὁ θεός μου **κεκράξομαι** ἡμέρας καὶ οὐκ **εἰσακούσῃ** καὶ νυκτός καὶ οὐκ ἄνοιαν ἐμοί
> O my God, I will cry by day, and you will not listen, and by night, and it becomes folly for me
>
> 21:6 (22:5): πρὸς σὲ **ἐκέκραξαν** καὶ ἐσώθησαν ἐπὶ σοὶ ἤλπισαν καὶ οὐκ κατῃσχύνθησαν
> To you they cried and were saved; in you they hoped and were not put to shame
>
> 21:16 (22:15):. . .καὶ εἰς χοῦν **θανάτου** κατήγαγές με
> . . . and to death's dust you brought me down

F. Mason and Kevin B. McCruden; SBL Resources for Biblical Study 66; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2011), 220 admits that the words "bear some resemblance" to Gethsemane, but insists that the differences are substantial enough to suggest that this is a variant of the Gethsemane tradition.

39 Furthermore, recent research is gradually grasping how memory works; see Keith, "Memory and Authenticity," 155–77.

40 It is worth noting that Heb 5:7 speaks of prayers in the plural, thus implying a frequent practice rather than a discrete event. Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 976 points out it was most likely that, towards the end of his life, Jesus was remembered as struggling with God about his fate more than once and that the Gethsemane scene telescopes these episodes into a single event.

> 21:25 (22:24): ὅτι οὐκ ἐξουδένωσεν οὐδέ πρώσχισθεν **τῇ δεήσει** τοῦ πτωχοῦ οὐδὲ ἀπέστρεψεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἀπ᾽ ἐμοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ **κεκραγέναι** με πρὸς αὐτὸν **εἰσήκουσέν** μου
> because he did not despise or scorn the petition of the poor, nor did he turn away his face from me, and when I cried, he listened to me

I have emphasized the lexical connections. Additionally, this psalm depicts the righteous sufferer, a situation of pain, distress, and continual praying that is finally being heard. Furthermore, this psalm is associated in the gospel traditions with Jesus' cry on the cross. We note below that for Justin Martyr, Ps 22 was the primary text for explaining Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane.[41] This fact is a reminder not to force the debate on Heb 5:7–9 easily into a simple binary construction with regard to Gethsemane.[42]

We then turn to Ps 116, which in Greek and Latin Bibles is divided into two psalms. Verses 1–9 appear as Ps 114 and verses 10–19 as Ps 115.[43]

> 114:1 . . . ὅτι **εἰσακούστης** κύριος τῆς φωνῆς **δεήσεώς** μου
> . . . because the Lord will listen to the voice of my petition

> 114:2 ὅτι ἔκλινεν τὸ οὖς αὐτοῦ ἐμοί, καὶ **ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις μου** ἐπικαλέσομαι
> . . ., because he inclined his ear to me, and in my days I will call

> 114:3 περιέσχον με **ὠδῖνες** θανατόυ **κίνδυνοι ᾅδου** ἕυροσάν με θλῖψιν καὶ ὀδύνην εὗρον
> Pangs of death encompassed me; hazards of Hades found me; affliction and grief I found.

> 114:4 . . . ῥῦσαι τὴν ψυχήν μου
> . . . rescue my soul!

> 114:6 φυλάσσων τὰ νήπια ὁ κύριος ἐταπεινώδην καὶ ἔσωσέν με
> The Lord is one who protects infants; I was brought low, and he saved me.

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41 See Chapter 10 of the present study.

42 This is overlooked by Swetnam, "Crux," 354–56. This observation also serves as a reminder against Richardson's claim that the passage refers exclusively to Golgotha.

43 This has been worked out by August Strobel, "Die Psalmengrundlage der Gethsemane-Parallele Hebr. 5,7ff." *ZNW* 45 (1954): 252–66.

114:8 ὅτι ἐξείλατο τὴν ψυχήν μου **ἐκ θανάτου** τούς ὀφθαλμούς μου ἀπὸ **δακρύων**. . .
. . . because he delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears.

115:4 **ποτήριον** σωτηρίον λήμψομαι
A cup of deliverance I will take

115:6 τίμιος ἐναντίον κυρίου **ὁ θάνατος** τῶν ὁσίων αὐτου
Precious before the Lord is the death of his devout ones.

In addition to the emphasized lexical relationships, common important motives resonate in this language, such as being saved from the threat of death, prayers being heard, intense prayer, and God's concern for his holy ones. From a focused Gethsemane perspective, the appearance of "cup" is worth noting as well.

The closing of Sir 51:6–12 is also important, since it adds to the traditional picture of troubled prayers' being heard. Although the outlook of Sirach hardly allows for hope in the afterlife, both vocabulary and motives echo what we find in Heb 5:7: ". . . And I raised up my supplication (**ἱκετείαν**) from the earth, and I begged for deliverance from death (ὑπὲρ **θανάτου** ῥύσεως ἐδεήθην) . . . My petition was heard (**εἰσηκούσθη**), for you saved me from destruction (ἔσωσας γάρ με ἐξ ἀπωλείας καὶ ἐξείλου με ἐκ καιροῦ πονηροῦ). . ." This biblical language of hearing troubled prayer represents an important layer of interpretation, which we have already seen at work in Mark's Gospel. A consequence of its being embedded in Scripture is that historical references become vague and imprecise. To judge from the vocabulary, therefore, a reference to the garden prayer is blurred, but this applies equally to Golgotha.[44] The rhetorical context in which this prayer is made to work is crucial.

## 9.3 The Rhetorical Strategy in which Heb 5:7–9 is Embedded

Rhetorically speaking, the prayer of Jesus with tears and loud voice addressed to him who is able to save from death is designed to exemplify how believers who experienced weakness and temptation should respond (Heb 4:14–16). These prayers work rhetorically to establish Jesus as a trustworthy agent for

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44 Gray, *Godly Fear*, 169 considers the creative and extensive use of the Psalter as an alternative "to the hypothesis that Gethsemane provides the only and most appropriate lens through which to view the interaction between God and Jesus in Heb 5:7."

believers who find themselves in similar situations of temptations and weakness. We have registered that the temptation motif was at the center of this *chreia* tradition of Jesus in Gethsemane, and that affinities to the Lord's Prayer and God's will were equally important. From that perspective, it is worth noting that πειράζω appears in both Heb 2:18 and 4:15. Jesus' being tempted or tested serves the purpose of helping his brothers and sisters in need, due to their weakness (ἀσθένεια), which might be a further echo of the Gethsemane tradition as it appears explicitly in Mark 14:38 and Matt 26:41. In both texts, it is the flesh (σάρξ) that is weak, thus making another terminological link (2:14 cf. 4:15) between the Gethsemane tradition and the Hebrews passage in question: "in the days of his flesh." The weak flesh within a temptation context further strengthens the similarities between the two traditions.

The frankness or boldness of the prayer of the believers (Heb 4:16) is a fruit of their confidence that their helper Jesus was equally tested (Heb 2:14; 4:15 cf. 7:25). For this to work rhetorically, the author of Hebrews portrayed Jesus in a way somewhat juxtaposed[45] to the situation of the addressees. The description of Jesus at prayer has a reference that goes beyond Gethsemane, but this incident appears to be the lens through which a more general picture is given. The Gethsemane prayer is the scene that befits both the temptation and the weakness motives that are at central here.

The intensive prayer "with loud cries and tears" recalls both the Gethsemane prayer and Jesus' dicta at the cross (Mark 15:34, 37; Matt 27:46). The expression "with loud cries" finds, no doubt, its closest analogy in the ἐβόησεν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ uttered by Jesus at the cross; nothing similar about him is reported in Gethsemane. However, tears are not mentioned as Jesus was on the cross either and this is, after all, of no less importance here. Tears bring to mind Luke's longer version, though with no terminological correspondence, but we cannot infer from Heb 5:7 that the author was familiar with Luke's longer version. We may surmise that he was familiar with a tradition or a paraphrase approximating that tradition, as this tradition in Luke is indeed old, though hardly authentic.

This brings us to the question of the prepositional phrase σῴζειν αυτὸν ἐκ θανάτου. Is this to be rendered "from death," thus implying imminent death, or rather "out of death"? How this question is answered affects both the content of the prayers in 5:7 and the enigmatic "he was heard" in the same verse. The second option makes a reference to Gethsemane less likely and is preferred by Attridge, who also calls upon Ps 116 (114): 8 (see above).[46] This is by no means

45 The tension implicit in this comparison is what "although he was son" (Heb 5:8) targets.

46 See Attridge, "Heard," 91; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 150; Gray, *Godly Fear*, 192.

obvious; σῴζειν may be followed by either ἀπὸ or ἐκ. Some instances where ἐκ appears are ambiguous, but in many places this preposition introduces the circumstances from which one is saved or redeemed.[47] John 12:27 (σῶσόν με ἐκ τῆς ὥρας ταύτης) is of particular interest on this issue, since it represents an independent Gethsemane tradition.[48] The answer that Jesus there himself provides ("No, it is for this reason that I have come") makes no sense if it is a prayer about being raised from death.[49] It is the release from what lies immediately ahead that is denied in the Fourth Gospel.

Although the content of Jesus' prayers is not given, most scholars agree that it is to be found in the way God is described here as "the one who was able to save him from death."[50] Hence, it is a prayer concerned about Jesus' imminent death, which finds its closest parallel in the Gethsemane prayer of the passing of the cup. It is unlikely that the prayers referred to here were about resurrection,[51] though it may still be implied in his being "heard" (see below). The primary reason for calling into question a Jesus who pleads for resurrection is that such an interpretation does not account sufficiently for the point that follows in Heb 5:7, that he learned obedience through trying circumstances (see below). This implies some struggle with his destiny. Describing the purpose of his painful prayers in this way points to his dread of death rather than to prayer for vindication.

## 9.4 The Perfection of Christ and his being "Heard"

Christopher A. Richardson states his position on what it means that Jesus was "heard" very clearly: "Christ prayed for personal deliverance in some sense. And since the context is Golgotha, not Gethsemane, it is very unlikely that the phrase σῴζειν αὐτὸν ἐκ θανάτου concerns his protection from imminent death,

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47 BAGD s.v. mentions Heb 5:7 in this connection. See also Jas 5:20 (ambiguous); Jude 1:5.23 cf. 1 Pet 1:18, Gal 3:13; Sir 29:2; 51:2.

48 See Chapter 8.3 of the present study.

49 Thus also David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the 'Epistle to the Hebrews'* (SNTSMS 47; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 88.

50 See for example O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 199.

51 *Pace* Attridge, *Hebrews*, 150; Koester, *Hebrews*, 288; Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 291; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (The New Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 146.

but rather his resurrection out of the realm of death."[52] He was "heard" in "the special divine action of raising him from the dead."[53] This makes perfect sense if one accepts Richardson's denial of Gethsemane here. However we have seen that such a denial overly simplifies or ignores too much complexity in this passage.[54] Hence, another look at what "heard" actually refers to is required.

Rudolf Bultmann serves to illustrate a general frustration among scholars on this passage. In his article on εὐλαβής and cognates in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*,[55] he suggests inserting οὐκ ("not") before "heard" here. Jesus was not heard; that is in accordance then with what happened at Gethsemane. Oscar Cullmann has taken the view opposite of Richardson. He argues that Jesus was in fact "heard," in the sense that he was liberated from his fear of death. According to Cullmann,[56] the entire context demands the sense of ordinary human fear as the meaning of εὐλάβεια, which is what the temptation is about, ordinary human fear of death. Jesus was heard when he conquered that fear by praying "not my will." It is implied that the reference of "he was heard" is that Jesus was released from his fear of death and thus willingly embraced God's purpose. In this reading, "heard" implies that Jesus is portrayed as involved in a personal process and that the two parts of the Gethsemane prayer encapsulate a process from the desire to have the cup pass from him to willing submission. In my view, Cullmann accounts for the process involved in Heb 5:7–9 better than Richardson.

This passage is clearly integrated into the presentation of Jesus as the suffering high priest. Accordingly, God's hearing his prayer refers broadly speaking to the divine approval and acceptance of his ministry, which is demonstrated throughout Hebrews (see for example 8:1–13). The resurrection is of course the climax of his being heard, as implied in verse 1 evoking Ps 110:1 (cf. 4:14; 12:2; 13:20). However, this larger perspective should not distract us from the fact that Heb 5:7 speaks more specifically about his prayers being "heard" within the context of temptation. The Gethsemane story as we know it from the gospels provides some possibilities of identifying what this entails. In the first place,

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52 Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 83.

53 Richardson, *Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith*, 83.

54 The recent commentary by Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich..: Eerdmans, 2012), 244 formulates this correctly: "It is better to see this entire verse as a depiction of the utter dependence upon God that characterized the Son's earthly life and came to its climax in Gethsemane and on the cross."

55 *TDNT* 2:753. Bultmann follows an emendation suggested by Adolf von Harnack; for references see Attridge, "'Heard,'" 91. In some earlier editions of Nestle-Aland, this conjecture was included in the margin of Heb 5:7.

56 Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1975), 96.

his prayer in the garden consists of two parts, the request for being spared death and for God's will to be done.[57] Between these two there is a possibility of Jesus being strengthened and confirmed in his mission and thus paving the way for his being "heard." Twice, the traditions on Gethsemane speak about Jesus being strengthened. God heard Jesus' prayer in sending an angel to assist him.[58] Similarly, in John 12:27–29 Jesus is affirmed by a voice from heaven that the people take to be an angel. These two strands of the tradition may have contributed to the notion of Jesus being "heard."[59] The idea that Jesus was assisted, perhaps by angels, is not at all foreign to his superior role in Hebrews chs. 1–2, where angels are given the role of serving (εἰς διακονίαν, 1:14).

The Greek noun εὐλάβεια is ambiguous;[60] it certainly has the meaning of fear or exercising caution and when directed towards God, it often takes on the notion of reverence or piety, as is the case in Hebrews. The passage in Heb 11:7 is ambiguous; did Noah build the arch out of fear or piety? Both options are possible, but the entire context of Hebrews 11 as a catalogue of heroes of faith makes the latter by far more likely. The passage in Heb 12:28 uses this term for worship that is pleasing to God; hence reverence, piety, or godly fear is the appropriate rendering here,[61] and ἀπὸ accordingly means "because of." Jesus was heard because of his piety, implying that God guided him to learn obedience. A personal process within a setting addressing prayer and testing needs to be accounted for; Gethsemane adds to this perspective.

### 9.4.1 *A Vocational Process*

Jesus is said to be "perfected" (τελειωθεὶς)[62] to become the "source of salvation for all who obey him." This implies that he is not only a pioneer but also an example for the believers to imitate (Heb 2:10–18; 12:2–3 cf. 4:15–16; 7:28). Common motives and terminology suggest that these texts together with Heb 5:7–9 present Jesus as a trustworthy and sympathetic helper within Hebrews. As pointed out by David Peterson, these texts hint at an inner development on

57 For example, Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews*, 84–85.

58 Pfitzner, *Hebrews*, 92 considers the possibility that "he was heard" refers to Jesus' being strengthened by an angel from heaven (Luke 22:43), but concludes by saying that it really refers to the resurrection.

59 See Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 231.

60 LSJ s.v. and BAGD s.v.

61 See Gray, *Godly Fear*, 201–205.

62 "Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (Heb 5:8–9)

the part of Christ, particularly in 5:7–9.[63] Harold W. Attridge speaks of a "vocational process" making him fit for his office, a process with "personal dimensions as well."[64] Jesus is portrayed as having gone through a process equipping him for his final sufferings. "Perfection" in the theology of Hebrews is closely connected with fulfillment and the defined order. When applied to Christ, it is about his being qualified and equipped for the high priestly office assigned to him (Heb 7:28). It is from this perspective that Gethsemane comes into play in Hebrews 5, but it also implies that the garden scene echoed here is embedded into a larger perspective and story.

The dominant perspective of these texts is the redemptive achievement of Jesus' death once and for all, for which he also was "crowned with glory and honor," as Heb 2:9 puts it. It is obvious that this refers to the resurrection, making it natural to say that the ultimate answer to Jesus' prayer, his being "heard," was God's raising him from the dead. However, there is also the perspective of Jesus' being perfected to be a help to his brothers and sisters, as these texts put it. The passage in Heb 2:10 speaks about his being "made perfect "through sufferings (διὰ παθημάτων τελειῶσαι)," which is not merely synonymous with the expression "because of the suffering of death (διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου)" in the preceding verse. Indeed, the perspective is wider and the writer has in view the whole experience of suffering associated with and leading up to the death of Jesus. This makes Gethsemane particularly relevant, because that is the primary scene in the Jesus tradition exhibiting that Jesus underwent some development that consisted of testing, suffering, and submission with regard to his purpose. In the passages given above, the writer draws parallels between the experiences of Christ and those of the believers, encapsulated most clearly in συμπαθῆσαι ταῖς ἀσθενείαις ἡμῶν ("to sympathize with our weaknesses," 4:15), thus bringing to mind the analogous relationship between Jesus and the believers in this part of Hebrews.

The perfecting of Christ serves a parenetic purpose in this literature.[65] It is especially worth noting that the passage immediately following (5:11–6:2) speaks of the addressees as growing weary, and in need of "making progress;" they fail to behave maturely (τέλειοι). Jesus' having been made perfect and the admonition "let us go toward perfection" in 6:1 are consciously juxtaposed. This concern is repeated in 10:35–36, which prepares for the *agôn* mentioned in 12:1–3. Very consciously, the author portrays Jesus in 12:1–3 in a way that is equivalent to how the believers are described in 10:35–36: endurance, suffering,

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63 Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 66–70.

64 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 86, 97.

65 Frequently stated; see Heb 2:1; 3:8.15; 4:1; 5:11–6:12; 10:32–39.

*agôn*, and reaching the final goal. Jesus exhibited an example of submission to God's will, faith, and perseverance that is central to the addressees who are about to be fainthearted on their journey to the final rest and their own perfection. This is precisely why Christ through his example is able to offer a helping hand (βοηθῆσαι/βοήθεια), as it is phrased in Heb 2:18 and 4:16.

For the portrayal of Jesus as learning obedience to work in accordance with the rhetoric here, it is vital to include Gethsemane. This implies that the peak of his being "heard" is the resurrection, but that the temptation, so decisive in this portrayal of learning obedience, also makes more sense if Gethsemane is involved. I therefore disagree with Attridge's claim that "the testing in view is not located in the temptations of Jesus, but in his suffering."[66] That is a narrowing of the perspective. The cross is certainly the culmination of his suffering, but Gethsemane traditions embody in a special way what it means to be tempted (4:15–16). For the rhetorical strategy to work fully, Gethsemane is important in the admonition of Hebrews.

Christ submitted to God's will ("he learned obedience through what he suffered");[67] God's will was fulfilled (Heb 5:8). I think "learning obedience through suffering" is an apt paraphrase of the Son submitting to the will of the Father through a process of learning.[68] As pointed out by Attridge, the entire ministry of Jesus in Heb 10:7, 9 is summarized by precisely these words: "I have come to do your will (ἥκω τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημά σου)," which refers to his entire ministry.[69] Nevertheless, through the idea of perfecting Jesus in a way that resembles that of his "brothers and sisters," Hebrews envisages his going through a process whereby he progressively embraces this will. This is the reason that the writer finds it necessary to introduce Heb 5:8 with the contrastive καίπερ, to be rendered "though" or "although." In the words of Attridge, "the force of the remark is that Jesus is not an ordinary Son, who might indeed have to experience to learn from suffering (12:4–11), but the eternal Son."[70] No other incident from the life of Jesus accounts for this distinction like Gethsemane.

### 9.4.2 *Educating Jesus* (*παιδεία*)

In commenting upon Heb 5:7–9, Luke Timothy Johnson says that it flourishes "on a commonplace of Greek moral discourse, based on the wordplay *mathein,*

66 Attridge, Hebrews, 96.

67 In Greek: ἔμαθεν ἀφ᾽ ὧν ἔπαθεν τὴν ὑπακοήν.

68 Thus also Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 91.

69 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 152.

70 Attridge, *Hebrews*, 152; similarly Johnson, *Hebrews*, 147.

*pathein* ('to learn is to suffer' or 'to suffer is to learn')."[71] Similarly, David deSilva says that 5:8–9 "echoes philosophical discourse on liberation from fear of death."[72] Key terms in this discourse are "learning," "suffering," "obedience," and "becoming perfect." Together these terms are at home in discourses on moral and philosophical progress in antiquity.[73]

The passage in Heb 12:4–11 is indeed relevant for the role occupied by educational motives in this literature. The term παιδεία with its cognates becomes the key term, occurring no less than eight times. Furthermore, the passage is enclosed by educational terms, most obviously the participle of γυμνάζω (to train or exercise) in verse 11; ἀνταγωνίζομαι (resist, v. 4) may also be considered in the same sense. Such terms have a wide currency that ranges from athletic competition to martyrdom. The passage is about education and thus brings to mind the common discourse on education as a process towards virtue. Raffaella Cribiore has in her important book on ancient education made this a primary perspective, as it appears in the title of her book: *Gymnastics of the Mind*.[74] This is widely supported in ancient texts (Philo *Agr*. 112–21; *Praem*. 3–6; *Congr*. 23–24, 31, 46; Lucian *Hermot*. 2–6).[75] A text like 1 Tim 4:7–10 on training oneself in godliness (εὐσέβεια) draws on traditional motifs of being trained in virtues and demonstrates that the terms in question occur in contexts such as Hebrews 12. It is worth noting that Heb 10:32 depicts the endurance required in similar terms (ἄθλησις).

The point of departure for Heb 12:4–11 is the educational passage from Prov 3:11–12 cited in verses 5–6 (cf. Prov 13:24). The two implications of the term παιδεία, education and discipline, are both assumed. Education by correction may be an appropriate way of approaching the matter; the passage emphasizes that this kind of education belongs among the privileges of being a son and aims at achieving a son's submissiveness to his father. Using the rationale of the lesser to the greater, the author then says that this applies even more to the heavenly Father (v. 9), although education by correction can brings pain (λύπη), if temporarily.

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71 For this proverbial expression see Johnson, *Hebrews*, 52–54, 147 and Attridge, *Hebrews*, 152–53. Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 93–95 also points out the educational imagery of this passage.

72 DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 118–19. He even mentions the example of Socrates that Jesus appears to adjust to in this passage.

73 Grässer, *Hebräer*, 295, 305 also emphasizes that divine *paideia* is involved in the portrayal of Jesus in Heb 5:7–10.

74 Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

75 See Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 16–39, 59–78.

To be sure, this passage is about the education by correction of the addressees, but the arguments given here are hardly irrelevant for grasping how Jesus is portrayed in the passage, since he serves as an illustration there. He also faced education by correction (5:8–9), though his characteristic as son is unique and he is the model to be imitated, as stated explicitly in Heb 12:2–3. In the light of the juxtaposition of Jesus and the addressees vis-a-vis being perfected, it is worth noting the language of milk and solid food in 5:13, educational terminology, within the context of being perfected.[76] Perfection clearly implies a progress or a growth from which Jesus was not exempted.

Although the author of Hebrews bends the discourse on education theologically, it does pertain to the question of Gethsemane traditions. We have seen that a relatively stable element in discourses on fear of death was the question of having true insight and knowledge. The Socratic tradition attested widely to the view that education, and philosophy in particular, was nothing but a preparation for dying and death.[77] Fear of death was a sign of being unlearned or ignorant (ἀπαίδευτος), even superstitious, so Heb 5:7 negotiates this commonplace in educational discourse.

Patrick Gray has argued that the author of Hebrews has an apologetic interest in addressing the perception that Christian faith is a superstition. Hence, "the articulation of Christian faith in Hebrews may be understood in the context of debates about appropriate and inappropriate fear..."[78] Although I find that Gray overdoes his case—fear is not as pervasive as he claims—he has identified an important context against which Heb 5:7–9 makes sense. Ancient παιδεία includes elements of both education and discipline. Jesus' primary achievement was, of course, to bring redemption, but Hebrews implies that Jesus also embarked upon παιδεία, a perfection completed on the cross. Gethsemane and the cross form one continuous line of submitting to God's will and being obedient in Jesus' life. Against the background of the education discourse, the garden scene acquires special relevance since Jesus is portrayed as struggling to embrace the divine will, which is precisely the situation of the addressees of Hebrews as well.

### 9.4.3 *What About 2:15?*

I have argued above that Gethsemane traditions can be uncovered as part of a sub-textual terrain in Heb 5:7–9, but if this is so, what are we to make of Heb 2:15? Jesus' experience in the garden, as we know it from the Synoptic Gospels

76 Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 62–64.

77 See Chapters 2, and 2.5.1 and 2.4.2 in particular

78 Gray, *Godly Fear*, 5–6 (quotation p. 6); cf. 216.

generally, fits nicely into the author's emphasis on Jesus' solidarity and sympathy with believers in their weaknesses. Jesus shared the experiences of the believers in all possible ways, though without sin (Heb 4:15–16). Against this background it comes as a surprise that Jesus is said to have come "to free (ἀπαλλάξῃ) those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death (ὅσοι φόβῳ θανάτου διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ζῆν ἔνοχοι ἦσαν δουλείας)" (Heb 2:15). This job description might actually have been picked from those critics who held against Jesus that these words were an accurate description of his behavior in Gethsemane. Our surprise grows as we note that the immediately preceding verse 14 is about Jesus' sharing of all human conditions, echoed again in 4:14 and 5:7. This is precisely the kind of enslavement from which he now brings deliverance. At the critical moment of his life, he appeared as a person in whom reason was subject to emotions, as the prologue of 4 Maccabees might have put it. Such enslavement is bound to cause deception of true commitments.

Judged from common Christian tradition, it comes as no surprise that Jesus' death deprives death and the devil of their power, so the passage in Heb 2:14 echoes familiar and traditional theology. It is possible to take verse 15 as simply remaining within that framework, as David Peterson does.[79] He pays scarcely any attention to the fear involved in this liberating act, and I think Luke Timothy Johnson is correct in making this a point of some special interest. The formulation involves more than common Christian doctrine. Johnson notes that the text speaks about "being liberated from an emotion that distorts the existence" and that this paralyzing effect of death was contemplated in Greco-Roman philosophy[80] (see above). Furthermore, the text addresses this as a lifelong fear rather than a sudden, acute concern. Hebrews at this point shows a familiarity with the philosophical discourse that has informed the present investigation at many points.

The superiority of Jesus' sacrificial death according to Hebrews is extended here to even this fundamental human problem. Jesus' death delivered humanity from death's power and thus from the fear of death. Jesus' sacrifice transformed the paralyzing effects of death on human beings. However, this theology apparently runs against the evidence from Gethsemane. Given the author's familiarity with this tradition as argued above, his expression is only possible if that particular story has been considerably reshaped or reinterpreted. This brings us back to Heb 5:7–9, where we saw that reshaping is precisely what is occurring. Gethsemane is primarily about obedience and the suffering, which

79 Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 62.

80 Johnson, *Hebrews*, 101–102. Human subjection to death is of course also found in Jewish sources such as Job 4:18–21; Sir 40:1–9.

is not removed, is primarily altruistic, either preparing Jesus for his death or equipping him to become a genuine sympathetic helper to the believers. Jesus' himself being afraid of his own fate is certainly included in 5:7–8, but it never becomes an issue as such. His fear of death was for the benefit of others facing this fear. This accounts for what might otherwise appear as a tension between Heb 2:14–15 and Jesus' prayers with tears and loud voice.

## 9.5 Summing Up

The chapter has turned against the view holding that Gethsemane and the passion are considered alternatives in the exegesis of Heb 5:7–9. The garden scene makes sense of the rhetorical situation in a way hardly applicable to the cross in isolation. This applies particularly to the temptation perspective, which should guide the interpretation of the passage in question. The similarities between Hebrews 5 and Gethsemane are many:[81]

– Jesus is in both traditions presented as Son approaching Father in prayer;
– In both traditions, the incident involves the weakness of "flesh." According to Hebrews, this happened "in the days of his flesh" which correlates with the weakness of the addressees (4:15) and the synoptic dictum on the weakness of the flesh in times of temptations;
– Temptation is crucial to both traditions;
– In both traditions the idea of God's omnipotence and his ability to accomplish everything (Mark 14:36) is stated. In Hebrews, this is implicitly found in God's ability to save Jesus from death.[82] The participle ὁ δυνάμενος about God (Heb 5:7) corresponds to πάντα δυνατά σοι in Mark 14:36;
– Tears are involved in Hebrews and in the longer Lukan version;
– The question of being rescued from death is at the center of both traditions;
– In both Hebrews and two strands of the narrative Gethsemane traditions (Luke and John), Jesus finds support or strength equivalent to being "heard";

81 Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 232–33 has listed the similarities between Heb 5 and the Gethsemane prayer and Jesus' prayer on the cross. His conclusion is that there are more similarities to the Gethsemane scene than to the prayer on the cross. However, he disagrees with those who relate Heb 5 *only* to Gethsemane, a criticism I support. Compared to the list given by Brown, my presentation adds two important observations, namely the aspect of testing and weakness (noted only in passing by Brown) and most importantly the *paideia* perspective.

82 Thus also Cha, "Confronting Death," 259–60.

- In both traditions, emotions and being troubled are involved and find physical expression;
- In both traditions, being obedient to God's will is crucial (cf. Heb 10:9);
- In both traditions, there is a development or evolution from being troubled by the notion of accepting God's will (*paideia*).

### 9.5.1 *What Does Gethsemane Look Like in Hebrews?*

What then does the Epistle to the Hebrews add to the discourse on Gethsemane? The prayer is drawn into Jesus' sacrificial ministry and becomes an integral part thereof. His sacrificial death, or high priestly office, and his prayers with loud cries and tears belong together. Accordingly, Jesus' performance in Gethsemane is not about himself; ultimately it is for the benefit of others. His distress assumed in the prayers of 5:7–9, becomes a point of departure for portraying Jesus as a sympathetic helper to the believers in their process towards perfection. Thus Gethsemane becomes an altruistic incident in accordance with Jesus' ministry at large. This incident of weakness becomes part of his being tested and his struggle to submit to God's will. The peak of this process is his dying on the cross.

In the noun εὐλάβεια, the author has found a category embracing both anxiety and piety, but with piety prevailing. The emphasis is moved from Jesus' dread of death to his piety. His anxiety does not disappear, since the educational aspect does keep suffering at the center of his being perfected for his office. Together with the cross, Gethsemane finds its place within this idea in Hebrews: prayer with tears and cries, testing, submitting to God's will, *agôn*, finding help, or being "heard." My investigation also suggests that the educational aspect mirrored in Hebrews rephrases Jesus' dread of death into an act of obedience. His individual struggle becomes collectively relevant, in being both paradigmatic and altruistic. Claire Clivaz has rightly pointed out that Heb 5:7 "expresses a perfect bridge between an individual and a collective interpretation of Gethsemane."[83]

Hebrews' special contribution is the παιδεία perspective, which has two implications. First, Gethsemane belongs within a vocational process that has made Jesus suitable for his office. In the second place, this mirrors, consciously or otherwise, the critique that pointed to this incident in Jesus' life as a demonstration of his being unlearned and ignorant when judged by contemporary ideals of moral and philosophical standards. The ways Jesus' story is told in the gospels do not offer much material for delving into his psychological development, but the Gethsemane episode disturbs a conveniently coherent

83 Clivaz, "Hebrews 5.7," 209.

picture of the gospels and provides a glance into a more complex identity in the making, particularly as his ministry draws to its culmination. In this way Gethsemane is in many ways an anti-text. It is therefore not surprising that this particular episode becomes relevant for instructing addressees who are also in a process towards perfection. Turning this anti-text into *paideia* is, of course, a way of overcoming the potentially embarrassing nature of it.

According to Joachim Jeremias, Heb 5:7 draws on Mark 14 with regard to the human weakness involved and to John 12:27–28 with regard to Jesus abstaining from the cup prayer.[84] His interpretation does not come to terms with the importance of temptation in this passage. As previously pointed out, in John's Gospel it is impossible to imagine Jesus being tempted.[85] Weakness and temptation bring Heb 5:7 into contact with the synoptic versions generally, while Jesus' being heard finds analogies in Luke's longer version and in John's Gospel. These two versions provide sufficient ground for questioning the view that "he was heard" is an obstacle to any interpretation that finds Gethsemane involved. From this it appears that Gethsemane was being gradually conceived as a scene within which God affirmed Jesus in terms of his death, thus answering his prayer, although the response did not take the form of accepting a plea to be rescued.

## 9.6 Post-Apostolic Gethsemane Discourses

We have traced three significant movements in the New Testament accounts. First, the anxiety of Jesus clearly caused disturbance. Agony is found in all four gospels, spelled out somewhat differently among them. Mark and Matthew are more or less identical here and, while Luke's shorter version tones it down, the shocking fact that Jesus had a wish to escape still resounds, though. In John's Gospel, the agony is not denied. Second, submission to the Father's will and plan is clearly voiced in all three Synoptic Gospels, with a development towards enhancing that aspect at the cost of the cup prayer. The Fourth Gospel leaves out the cup prayer entirely; the submission is everything there. What remains of the cup prayer is only a consideration denied. Third, the scene is in the Synoptic Gospels an anti-text in the stories, but is in different ways accommodated by representing it as a rehearsal of the passion; it finds its meaning in being a prelude to that crucial part of Jesus' ministry. Luke has smoothed out the tension with the larger story by emphasizing the submission and making

84 Jeremias, "Hebräer 5,7–10," 322–23.

85 See Chapter 8.3.4 of the present study.

Jesus into the ideal pray-er. The inconsistency between Gethsemane and the larger narrative is overcome in the Fourth Gospel.

From the second to fourth centuries, the discourse on Gethsemane becomes more vocal among Christians and it is increasingly clear that the story of Gethsemane enters discussions on various topics, serving more emphatically purposes beyond reporting on Jesus. In order to avoid the risk of lumping together in an unwarranted way sources addressing Gethsemane in importantly different ways, I have chosen to proceed by presenting some key figures independently. This is also in accordance with the approach of the present study, where the argument in which Gethsemane comes into play matters, demanding a source-by-source approach.

The material is indeed vast, and the following aims at presenting views distributed through the first centuries of the Common Era and representative, though by no means exhaustive, of discourses on Gethsemane in the post-apostolic period. A note on language is required. The sources pertaining to this period barely distinguish between incident and text and "Gethsemane" in my presentation has accordingly kept this ambiguity. Furthermore, when I frequently speak about Gethsemane as a text, this does not refer to any particular version, unless stated explicitly. This reflects the common view in the early Church that the texts taken together represented *the* text, a phenomenon most clearly seen in what are called the gospel harmonies. The relatively few genres of such harmonies is in no way evidence that Tatian was alone in thinking in such harmonious categories.

CHAPTER 10

# Justin Martyr: "Autobiographic" Gethsemane

## 10.1 Old Testament as "Autobiography"

It is natural to start this part of the study with Justin Martyr.[1] In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, written sometime between 155–67, Justin devotes much space to addressing Ps 22 as key to understanding the entire ministry of Jesus (chapters 98–107). As demonstrated by Judith M. Lieu, Justin turns the biblical metaphorical imagery of this psalm into descriptive narrative.[2] This is highly relevant for the present study, since Justin in so doing anticipates an approach whereby the available sources on Gethsemane are multiplied through prophetic readings of the Old Testament. That means that the psalm fills in blanks in the life of Jesus and in his passion in particular. The psalm is a prophecy that finds its detailed fulfillment in the Gethsemane story. Justin reads the psalm as *prosopoïïa*, as sayings uttered by Jesus himself. He speaks about himself in this psalm, a fact that naturally adds authority and significance to Justin's additional source, which then provides "autobiographical notices" on the event. Justin argues that this psalm predicted even details to be fulfilled in the life of Jesus.

In *Dial.* 98 much of the psalm is cited at length, with chapter 99 introduced by Justin's saying: "I will now show you [Trypho] that the whole Psalm referred to Christ…"[3] His exegesis of the psalm proceeds from the passage of Ps 22:2

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1 A search in Édouard Massaux, *The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature Before Saint Irenaeus* (ed. Arthur J. Bellinzoni; New Gospel Studies 5/1–3; Macon, Ga.: Mercer and Peeters, 1990–93) makes evident that Gethsemane, in its Matthean fashion, does not occur often before Justin Martyr; the exception is Pol. *Phil.* 7:2 (Vol. 5/2 pp. 31–32) and *Mart. Pol.* 7:1; 8:1; 4; 6:1 (Vol. 5/2 pp. 46–49). The passages taken from *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* refer mostly to the imitation of Christ idea presented in Chapter 3 of this study. Craig D. Allert, *Revelation, Truth, Canon and Interpretation: Studies in Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho* (Supplements to VC 64; Leiden: Brill, 2002) does not refer to Gethsemane.

2 Judith M. Lieu, "Justin Martyr and the Transformation of Psalm 22," in *Biblical Traditions in Transmission. Essays in Honour of Michael A. Knibb* (ed. Charlotte Hempel and Judith M. Lieu; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 195–211.

3 The translation with minor changes is from *Saint Justin Martyr: The First Apology, The Second Apology, Exhortation to the Greeks, The Monarchy of the Rule of God* (tr. Thomas B. Falls; FC; The Catholic University of America Press, 1965). Greek text *Iustini Martyris Dialogus cum Tryphone* (ed. Miroslav Marcovich; Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1997).

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("My God, My God, why have you forsaken me") quoted by Jesus on the cross.[4] This verse corresponds to Jesus' situation and turns the psalm into a narrative description throughout; it applies in detail to both the passion and the fuller life of Jesus.[5] The overall picture is that his life and ministry according to the psalm were susceptible to suffering. In what way is Gethsemane affected by taking this "autobiographical" source into account?

## 10.2 A Story of Sufferings

By taking Psalm 22 (21) as descriptive and Jesus as speaking about himself, Justin is led to construe the whole life of Jesus, from Bethlehem to passion, as marked by suffering, enmity, and hostilities. The story of suffering started when a "roaring lion opened his mouth against me," as the psalm has it. For Justin this refers first to Herod but eventually also to Pilate, "or it could be that by the lion that roared against Him He meant the devil himself (*Dial.* 103.5). This paves the way for the first temptation scene of the gospels, from which Justin turns directly to Gethsemane (*Dial.* 103.5–9). The devil who once deceived Adam thought he could do harm to Jesus as well. This is the larger perspective and the backdrop against which Gethsemane is seen, very much in line with Luke 4:13 and the Synoptic Gospels generally.[6] The human enemies Jesus faces are described with metaphors from the psalm, such as calves and bulls; which represent the disguised devil. All this means that Gethsemane and passion are seen together; they are intrinsically entangled as incidents on a continuum: Gethsemane anticipates the passion, while the passion explains Gethsemane. In *Dial.* 99.2, the chronology of Gethsemane is set to "the day of his crucifixion" (see below). This remarkable chronology is likely due to the coherence between Gethsemane and Golgotha that Justin assumes.[7] In fact, reading Psalm 22 (21) as *prosopoïïa* contributed to this merging of the events; the crying prayer of Jesus and his prayer on the cross that God had abandoned him are not distinguished in the psalm. Hence, they also belong together in Jesus' life; they embody this prophetic psalm. Justin demonstrates the intimate relationship between garden and cross in his first remark on the psalm:

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4 Mark 15:34; Matt 26:46.

5 Oskar Skarsaune, "Justin and His Bible," in *Justin Martyr and His Worlds* (ed. Sara Parvis and Paul Foster; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 61–62.

6 The way Macarius negotiated the motif of temptation in *Apocriticus* proves the importance of this aspect in Christian tradition; see Chapter 4.8 in the present study.

7 Thus also Cha, "Confronting Death," 266–67.

> Permit me to quote that whole Psalm, that you may perceive how He reveres His Father (πρὸς τὸν πατέρα εὐσεβὲς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε) and how He refers all things to Him (ὡς εἰς ἐκεῖνον πάντα ἀναφέρει), as when He prays to be freed by Him from this death (σωθῆναι ἀπὸ τοῦ θανάτου); at the same time pointing out in the Psalm what sort of men His enemies were, and proving that He indeed (ἀληθῶς) became a man who was capable of suffering. (*Dial.* 98.1)

In this first remark, the entire passion is summarized in the Gethsemane scene. Jesus' prayer to be freed from death translates the cup prayer and his referring all things to his Father echoes the second prayer of Gethsemane. This means that both parts of his prayer are present and together portray Jesus as pious and trustful in accordance with Old Testament traditions. Jesus acts as did the fathers before him; he complied with their ideals of piety, trusting in God, hoping in him, and crying for his help (*Dial.* 101.1). The fathers were saved from their troubles (ἐρρύσω αὐτους); he was not. He became "the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people." He hoped for salvation, but found none. Such is Justin's brief summary of the cup prayer, not terribly different from Mark's paradoxical Gethsemane.

Thus Gethsemane is a prelude to the Passion in a double sense; it is a story about revering God and trusting in him, but also about being left without any help. The words of the psalm ("for there is none to help") encapsulate Jesus' Gethsemane experience and are also indicative of the whole Passion Narrative (*Dial.* 103.2). Justin probably thinks of the way Jesus is depicted as solitary in the garden, left alone by his disciples. In this interpretation, reading Mark 14:41 (ἀπέχει) as referring to God being absent resonates deeply.

## 10.3 The Gospel According to Psalm 22 (21)

Twice in these chapters Justin narrates the Gethsemane story, however briefly. The two instances are worth quoting at length:

> "... O my God, I shall cry (κεκράξομαι) by day, and You will not hear, and by night,[8] and it is not want of understanding in me," depicted the very things that He was about to do. For, on the day of His crucifixion He took three of His disciples to the Mount of Olives, opposite the Temple in

8 This prayer took place at night (Ps 21:3), which finds confirmation in the gospel stories (Mark 14:30; Matt 26:34). The sleepy disciples add to the picture of a vigil here.

> Jerusalem, and prayed thus: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me;" but He ended His prayer by saying, "Not My will, but Yours be done," thus making it clear that He had really (ἀληθῶς) become a man capable of suffering. To offset the calumny (ἵνα μή τις λέγῃ) that He did not know then that He was to suffer, He immediately adds in the Psalm, "And it is not want of understanding in Me." (*Dial.* 99.2)

> And the following words of the Psalm, "For tribulation is very near (θλῖψις ἐγγύς);[9] for there is none to help ...." For, on that night when your kinsmen, sent by the Pharisees, Scribes, and teachers, met Him from the Mount of Olives, they surrounded Him, and were thus called by the Scripture "calves" with horns and predestined for perdition.... (1) Now the passage, "All my bones are poured out and scattered like water; my heart is become like wax melting in the midst of my belly," foretold what would happen on that night when they came to Mount Olivet to capture Him. For in the Memoirs of the Apostles and their successors, it is written that his perspiration poured out like drops of blood as He prayed and said: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." His heart and bones were evidently quaking, and His heart was like wax melting in His belly, so that we may understand that the Father wished His Son to endure in reality (ἀληθῶς) these severe sufferings for us (δι' ἡμᾶς), and may not declare that, since He was the Son of God, He did not feel (οὐκ ἀντελαμβάνετο) what was done and afflicted upon Him. And the words, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue hath cleaved to my jaws," predicted that He would remain silent (τῆς σιγῆς); for indeed, He who proved that all your teachers are without wisdom replied not a word in His own defense. (*Dial.* 103.7–9)

The role of the psalm as a direct source from which Justin gleans information on Gethsemane becomes evident. Hence, the portrayal of Jesus in the garden emphasizes his physical weakness in details unknown to the New Testament. Supporting evidence is drawn from the "memoirs of the Apostles" where it says that "his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground," while he says, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from me." His heart and bones were trembling, the heart melting like wax in the stomach. Such figurative descriptions of the righteous sufferer are transferred in a detailed way into physical agonies. Justin is thus an early witness to the longer version found in

9 This verse from the psalm resonates well with Mark 14:42 and Matt 26:45, which speak about the betrayer or the hour being at hand (ἐγγύς).

Luke's Gospel.[10] The physical struggle is to Justin an extension of Jesus' prayer in Luke 22:42, which implies that he takes the longer version to be about physical pains caused by Jesus' struggle to submit to his Father's will. This is not an athlete's fighting opponents, but a righteous sufferer's struggling with the will of God. According to Justin, this is recorded in the "Memoirs of the Apostles," which is an abbreviation for the gospels generally;[11] however, he does not specify any of them. Although some parts are identifiable with Luke's longer version, he most likely combines traditions, seeing them as speaking unanimously about Jesus in the garden. From his presentation it is nonetheless given that the context is Jesus' prayer in the garden. Gethsemane as part and parcel of the passion comes through clearly in these passages. Not only does Gethsemane take place on the very day of his crucifixion; he is suffering throughout. This suffering is done "for us," thus shaping the Gethsemane incident in accordance with common soteriology in altruistic terms.

If chronology substantiates theology in the way Gethsemane and crucifixion are joined here (see above), so geography may work similarly. Justin Martyr says that Gethsemane, or the Mount of Olives as Justin calls it, is located close to the temple (παρακείμενον εὐθὺς). Thomas B. Falls and ANF 1:248 render this as "opposite the temple," thus paving the way for a theological transformation.[12] Such an interpretation is fully possible in the light of *Dial.* 108.1–2, where Justin uses the fact that the temple was levelled as an argument for the truth of Christian faith vis-a-vis Judaism. However, the location of Gethsemane as it is given in the Greek leaves this a more open question.

### 10.3.1 *No Fake*

Three times within these chapters, Justin says that Jesus suffered in reality (ἀληθῶς). When this in *Dial.* 103.8 is contrasted with the view that Jesus as God's Son could not feel the pains of his sufferings like an ordinary human being, the repeated use of this adverb signals a confrontation with docetic Christology.[13] The Greek verb ἀντιλαμβάνω is about perceiving or taking notice

10 See Chapter 7.2 in the present study.

11 See Luise Abramowski, "Die 'Erinnerungen der Apostel' bei Justin," in *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien: Vorträge vom Tübinger Symposium 1982* (ed. Peter Stuhlmacher; WUNT 28; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 341–53; Allert, *Revelation*, 98–102, 188–93; Loveday Alexander, "Memory and Tradition in the Hellenistic Schools," in *Jesus in Memory: Traditions in Oral and Scribal Perspectives* (ed. Werner H. Kelber and Samuel Byrskog; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), 113–20; Skarsaune, "Justin and His Bible," 71–74.

12 Thus also Cha, "Confronting Death," 267, who considers Gethsemane as superior to the temple, due to the soteriological power that manifested itself there.

13 Abramowski, "Die Erinnerungen der Apostel bei Justin," 343.

of something.[14] Justin turns against those (see below) who consider Jesus' suffering to be only apparent, as something that did not really affect him. Some clearly claimed that Jesus as the Son of God was not subject to feeling the pains inflicted on him as ordinary human beings would have been under such circumstances. The antidocetic tendency finds its expression in the psalm's sentence "I am a worm, not a human being" (*Dial.* 98.3; 101.1, 2). We have also seen this biblical passage at work in the way that Macarius Magnes addresses the anonymous philosopher in *Apocriticus*.[15] For Justin this does not mean that Jesus did not feel pain like an ordinary man; on the contrary, Jesus suffered beyond what ordinary men do and Jesus' sufferings are contrasted with the fathers who did find the aid and rescue that was denied to him. There is an idea of a more severe death implicit here. This emphasis on "a greater suffering" reflects a Christological dispute in which Gethsemane figured. The "greater suffering" is clearly meant to underscore the reality of Jesus' humanity, but the argument also has the potential to set him apart from ordinary human beings as well, though this is hardly Justin's intention.[16]

The prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane is, as stated by Jesus himself in the psalm, a cry directed to God. Justin here uses the verb κράζειν, which does not occur in the gospels' report on this incident. It is imported from Ps 22 and demonstrates well how this autobiographical source worked by providing additional information. We have seen, however, that the cognate noun (κραυγή) finds a place in Heb 5:7 and the verb is used about the Lord's Prayer in Gal 4 and Rom 8.[17] Both examples are likely reminiscent of Gethsemane traditions; together, we see that there existed a tradition known to Justin that Jesus' cup prayer was equivalent to the cries of the righteous sufferers. Justin likely found his reading from Ps 22 to be fully in accordance with the tradition he knew.

Clearly, Justin's exposition takes place in a discussion with other views held on Gethsemane. He states explicitly that *some* (*Dial.* 99.2) would say that Jesus was ignorant with regard to the suffering to come upon him. Jesus says in Ps 22 that he was "not in want of understanding"; this comes into play in how Justin sees Gethsemane in opposition to unnamed others. In spite of the rather shadowy nature of these opponents, Justin conveys that they saw Gethsemane as a text that was in principle at conflict with the picture rendered elsewhere in the gospels. Their solution was to portray Jesus as not fully informed about what

14 BAGD s.v. Justin also uses it in this sense in *Dial.* 4.7.

15 See Chapter 4.8.6 in the present study.

16 We sense this more clearly in Origen (Chapter 14 in the present study).

17 See Chapters 9 and 15.1.1 in the present study.

lay ahead of him. Justin approaches this from another angle; for him the psalm militates against this view.

### 10.3.2 *Making Progress*

The psalm indicates that Jesus was not at any time without understanding, which Justin develops in two ways. First, he compares this to God, who asked for Adam's whereabouts in the garden of Eden, and to Cain, who asked where Abel was. Neither of them did so from a lack of knowledge, "but to convince each what sort of man he was, and to provide *us* with knowledge of all things through the Holy Scripture" (my emphasis). The prayer of Jesus taught what kind of person he was and his dread of death showed his true humanity. He faced death like an ordinary man (ὡς κοινὸν ἄνθρωπον), but he could not remain in Hades (*Dial.* 99.3).

Second, Justin sees Gethsemane as a step towards progress; Jesus was trained or prepared for the passion. The second prayer where he submits to God's will is seen as the climax of a process in which the cup prayer represents the initial phase. The perfect tense used in *Dial.* 99.2 (γεγένηται) and in 103.7 (γεγονέναι) implies that the cup prayer has given way to embracing God's will.[18] Although Justin denies that Jesus in Gethsemane lacked appropriate knowledge of what lied ahead of him, he admits that Gethsemane does imply some progress towards a full understanding. This becomes very nearly explicit in *Dial.* 103.9 in terms of how Justin closes his Gethsemane presentation. He proved all the teachers of Israel to be without wisdom.[19]

The silence of Jesus, emphasized by Justin, proves this to be true. There is a progress from the cup prayer to his embracing of the will of the Father and to his being silent. The silence is imported from both Psalm 22 and the Passion Narrative itself, but finds no corroboration in the Gethsemane scene as known from the gospels. Wisdom and silence while suffering bring to mind the ideal of dying courageously.[20] The fact that Justin's presentation of Gethsemane ends up in Jesus' being silent, a fact running contrary to the New Testament

18 Heb 5:7 also implies a *paideia* perspective on Gethsemane.

19 Cha, "Confronting Death," 268 misinterprets this: "In other words, Christ signified with such prayer that 'He would remain in Hades [as] any ordinary person'." Certainly, Justin emphasizes Jesus' humanity, but not with regard to Hades. There it shows that Jesus was more than that; this is a reference to the resurrection. Cha overlooks the fact that the last sentence of *Dial.* 99.3 is introduced by the participle plural νομιζόντων, which renders the opinion of those who did not understand; they thought that he died as an ordinary man and would remain so even in death. The context suggests that this refers to Justin's Jewish dialogue partners, real or not.

20 See Chapters 2, 3 and 4.2 in particular.

evidence, is an indicator of how influential his Gethsemane exposition is on the passion via Ps 22. The two very nearly become one and thus establish a Gethsemane more or less independent of the narrative accounts.

Justin appears less concerned about the ideals of noble death and cultural currencies on fearing death, although these at times do emerge in his text. His presentation of the agony is triggered by Trypho's critical questions in *Dial.* 89–90. The disgraceful (αἰσχρῶς καὶ ἀτίμως) suffering of Jesus is a stumbling block: "We find it impossible to think that this could be so" (*Dial.* 90.1). Trypho, therefore, asks from Justin that he show them (ἀπόδειξον ἡμῖν) from the Scriptures, so that he and his companions may believe as well. The context of a real dispute is evident here.

Justin's exposition of Gethsemane responds to this request for scriptural proof. The way in which Psalm 22 (21) becomes a firsthand source on what happened in Gethsemane makes the agony very physical to Justin, demonstrating Jesus' true humanity. That Jesus actually disclosed that his will differed from his Father's is blurred, though; his agony is primarily a lesson on his nature and identity. Although Justin reads Gethsemane in the light of Ps 21/22, which does not happen in the New Testament, he draws upon the common source of the righteous sufferer.[21] In his exposition, story and interpretation become one. The scriptural tradition of the righteous sufferer colors the event's interpretation but also contributes considerably to how Jesus is portrayed, since he himself speaks about this incident in Psalm 22.

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21 See Chapter 5.3.3 in the present study.

CHAPTER 11

# Tatian: Gethsemane Harmonized

While Justin practically interwove gospel sayings and traditions in a way that did not keep the distinctive Matthean, Markan, or Lukan wording, his most famous student Tatian[1] composed a fixed Gospel harmony, the so-called *Diatessaron*, where the four gospels are turned into one continuous story.[2] No complete text of Tatian's *Diatessaron* has survived; only fragments of it can be reconstructed on the basis of various translations and citations.[3]

## 11.1 Ordering the Events

The order of the pericopes is relatively consistent in the available text, although there are some exceptions.[4] As for the topic of the present study, it is evident from the context that the narrative framework is taken from the Synoptic Gospels, into which larger parts of John chs. 13–18 are interwoven. In chapters 46–47, however, Johannine texts dominate through longer passages from that Gospel. Section 45 is the table scene with the last meal, also inspired by John 13 and the dialogue about who the betrayer will be. It is well known

1 For a presentation of his life, see Ulrich Mell, *Christliche Hauskirche und Neues Testament: Die Ikonologie des Baptisterium von Dura Europos und das Diatessaron Tatians* (SUNT 77; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 205–11.

2 As pointed out by A.J. Bellinzoni, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Writings of Justin Martyr* (NovTSup 17; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 139–42, Tatian did not invent the method of making a harmony of gospel texts. Justin relied on a post-synoptic harmony consisting of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which does not mean that he actually knew a fixed harmony. See also Allert, *Revelation*, 195–203, 218. William L. Petersen, "Textual Evidence of Tatian's Dependence upon Justin's 'ΑΠΟΜΝΗΜΟΝΕΥΜΑΤΑ,' " *NTS* 36 (1990): 512–34 gives evidence, admittedly based on a limited number of examples, that Justin's a*pomnêmoneumata* and Tatian's *Diatessaron* are connected.

3 William L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarshi*p (Supplements to VC 25; Leiden.: Brill, 1994) 1 and 444 refers with consent to Arthur Vööbus' evaluation of the textual basis for a reconstruction of *Diatessaron* as "one of the most difficult topics in all the field of New Testament textual criticism."

4 See John Granger Cook, "A Note on Tatian's *Diatessaron*, Luke, and the Arabic Harmony," *ZAC* 10 (2007): 463.

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that Luke's Gospel includes the meal in a farewell discourse,[5] a fact that likely formed a bridge to John's farewell speech with the final prayer (chs. 13–17); in any case, this option suggested itself for someone making a harmony out of the gospels. This Johannine speech sets the tone in sections 46–47 and brings out the intimate and harmonious relationship between Jesus and his Father. This Johannine notion, of course, finds an analogy in the second prayer about Jesus submitting to his Father's will, but it has guided the understanding of the entire scene.

The Johannine farewell speech in Tatian's harmony includes passages from Luke 22 about Jesus sending out his disciples and the dictum about two swords (46:12–16). Luke provides the framework,[6] into which are added sayings from the other gospels, John in particular. Thus the prayer in ch. 17 belongs within the farewell assumed by Luke in ch. 22, but presented in a Johannine fashion. In this gospel harmony, John 17 immediately precedes the Gethsemane scene, which is the time for Jesus to be "glorified" (47:19–24). The combination of glorification and Gethsemane also comes naturally from John 12:27–28 as a Gethsemane text,[7] as that passage speaks in the same vein. Although section 48 on Jesus in Gethsemane follows the Synoptic Gospels rather closely (see below), it is obvious that this arrangement of pericopes does have a corollary in the scene itself. Gethsemane is the initial step in Jesus' "going to his Father" (48:2, 13, 31). The unity between Father and Son leaves no room for Jesus' being abandoned in the garden, although Tatian by no means removes the anxiety of Jesus (see below). On the cross, Jesus speaks in the vein of John's Gospel (52:7; John 19:30b), not like the Jesus of Mark's Gospel who finds himself abandoned by God. According to 47:23 (=John 17:4) he has now accomplished this task. After having finished the prayer in John 17, Jesus goes with his disciples to Gethsemane.

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5 William S. Kurz, "Luke 22:14–38 and Greco-Roman and Biblical Farewell Addresses," *JBL* 104 (1985): 251–68.

6 The privilege of Luke in *Diatessaron* is also pointed out by Vernon K. Robbins, "Lukan and Johannine Tradition in the Qur'an: A Story of (and Program for) *Auslegungsgeschichte* and *Wirkungsgeschichte*," in *Moving Beyond New Testament Theology? Essays in Conversation with Heikki Räisänen* (ed. Todd Penner and Caroline van der Stichele; Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 88; Helsinki: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 348–51. Robbins indicates that this may be an influence of Marcionite sympathies.

7 See Chapter 8.3 in the present study.

## 11.2 Troubled Outwardly and Cup Prayer

Section 48 of *Diatessaron* addresses Gethsemane directly. The following takes the Arabic translation as point of departure (ANF 10).[8] According to that version, Jesus at the beginning of the scene urges his disciples to pray in order to avoid temptations, thus showing affinity with a Lukan peculiarity. Jesus then brings Peter, John, and James with him "and he began to look sorrowful, and to be anxious. And he said to them, My soul is distressed unto death…" (48:5–7).[9] Tatian cites Mark 14:33–34/Matt 26:37–38, but one significant alteration occurs. In accordance with his teacher Justin, who turned the metaphors of Psalm 22 into physical descriptions, Tatian likewise assumes that Jesus was troubled in a way that others could actually see; he was not only troubled at heart. Furthermore, the Arabic translation makes reference to the longer Lukan version: "And then appeared unto him an angel from heaven, encouraging him. And being afraid he prayed continuously. And his sweat became like a stream of blood, and fell on the ground" (48:16–18). In addition to pointing out the strengthening angel, intensified prayer, and sweat like blood, Tatian takes ἐν ἀγωνίᾳ to be a reference to fear that was not removed by the angel. The fact that he brings together Mark, Matthew, and Luke makes Jesus appear both sorrowful in the beginning of the scene and in agony after the appearance of the angel. According to Tatian, the disciples felt asleep out of grief and anxiety, thus showing the influence of Luke's version.

Due to the Johannine emphasis on the unity between Father and Son in the sections leading up to the Gethsemane scene, it is obvious that the sorrowful Jesus praying in a way that conveys a clash of wills becomes impossible, but the sorrow and cup prayer are certainly there. Tatian's way out of this dilemma actually substantiates the interpretation given of Matthew above.[10] He renders the cup prayer in a Matthean way wherein the prayer is very much conditional: "My Father, if it is not possible with regard to this cup, except I drink it; thy will be done" (48:13; ANF 10:117).

Diatessaron thus works from a chronology laid out by the Synoptic Gospels, fits John 17 into it, renders the sorrow according to Mark and Matthew, and

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8 For the Arabic and Syriac text, see A.-S. Marmardji, *Diatessaron de Tatien* (Imprimerie Catholique: Beirut, 1935), where French translations are available. ANF 10 is based on the Arabic translation.

9 Thus also in the Syriac text where, however, the visible manifestation that Jesus was troubled is not mentioned, nor is the longer Lukan version (see below).

10 See Chapters 6.3.1 and 6.3.2 in the present study.

makes Matthew's cup prayer resound, including Luke 22:43–44 to present a truly harmonious picture.

## 11.3 When Individual Texts Become "Scripture"

According to *Diatessaron* 45:29 (citing John 14:1); 46:7 (citing John 14:27), and 47:18 (citing John 16:33), Jesus urges his disciples not to be afraid but to be courageous.[11] The citation of Mark and Matthew on Jesus' anxiety is somewhat surprising if seen from the dominant position given to John 14–17 in the sections that lead up to the Gethsemane scene. Thus *Diatessaron* is a reminder that it was possible to keep the Johannine version of Gethsemane together with the Synoptics without further explanation. With regard to the agony, that is after all not especially surprising as our exegesis of John made clear, but the fact that the cup prayer is present is more surprising from the same perspective. The cup prayer is rendered twice, in line with Mark and Matthew; the third time it is only mentioned narratively. In terms of content, it primarily echoes Matthew, which is easier to bring together with John 17.

Tatian unites what the author of the Fourth Gospel had difficulties in bringing together, namely that Jesus prayed to escape the passion. The way he compiled his gospel shows that Tatian was unconcerned about this issue. Obviously, the very genre of a gospel harmony was conducive to holistic readings that smoothed out discrepancies. More important and indeed fundamental to this study is that this method is indicative of an altered relationships to the gospels. They have become "Scripture" and enjoy a status that affects how they are interpreted. Viewing them under that umbrella term is, of course, conducive to readings that can bring together harmoniously texts that otherwise would be contradictory. Tatian serves here to pinpoint that the idea of "Scripture" has far-reaching consequences for the issue under examination in this study. It is under the aegis of this notion that Justin finds in Psalm 22 an autobiographical text and likewise that Tatian fits the cup prayer into a setting marked by John, a source wherein that particular prayer is conspicuously absent.

Tatian's *Diatessaron* was certainly controversial and it is not my intention here to make any statement about the canonical process. My aim is to point out that when the idea of a coherence uniting different writings begins to influence exegesis, it has repercussions for the way exegesis is carried out at the granular level. Tatian illustrates that very well with regard to Gethsemane; his

11 John 14:1 μὴ ταρασσέσθω ὑμῶν ἡ καρδία; John 14:27 μὴ ταρασσέσθω ὑμῶν ἡ καρδία μηδὲ δειλιάτω; John 16:33 θαρσεῖτε.

making a unified Gospel out of the fourfold gospels was an attempt to address the problem of their plural accounts.[12] In the present study, this is a matter of approach rather than a piece of canon history and points to an influential power in the discourses. The texts became pools from which doctrine or moral could be elicited, but also where apparent tensions are overcome by the mere fact that the texts in question are included among the term "Scriptures."

12 Tjitze Baarda, *Essays on Diatessaron* (Kampen: Pharos, 1994), 29–47 argues that Tatian's harmonizing of the gospels proceeded from the basic idea that truth manifested itself in unity and harmony. A plurality of gospels represented a threat to the status gradually being assigned to them as Scriptures conveying truth. See also Mell, *Christliche Hauskirche und Neues Testament*, 243–46. When Irenaeus insists on a fourfold Gospel (*Haer*. 3.11.8–9), in fact, he also argues from the one church dispersed under the four winds; harmony and unity are equally important to him. Irenaeus speaks about one quadriform Gospel; see D. Jeffrey Bingham, *Irenaeus's Use of Matthew's Gospel in Adversus Hareses* (Louvain: Peeters, 1998), 77–88.

CHAPTER 12

# "Orthodox" versus "Non-Orthodox" Gethsemane

The present chapter presents Irenaeus and the backdrop against which to read him. I do not claim that these particular sources are those that Irenaeus turns against, but they do offer opinions that run contrary to his view on Gethsemane and they represent the voices of many who differed from him on how to understand this incident.

In his magisterial work *Adversus Haereses*, composed in the years 180–85, Irenaeus sets out to refute the heretics commonly labeled "gnostic Christians."[1] The very first sentence of his prologue to this literature mentions τινες ("some") who set truth aside. Irenaeus sometimes names them, but at other times he is less specific and eschews precise identification. Such is the backdrop against which the Gethsemane occurrences in this literature are to be seen. Irenaeus twice refers directly to Gethsemane in a way relevant to the present study; in both cases this background comes vividly into play. Hence, it is important to delve into the context, both theologically and literally, of the passages in *Haer*. 1.8.2 and 3.22.2. In both instances, Jesus' prayer and his agony appear in contexts where Irenaeus defends and defines Christian doctrine against gnostic heretics. What matters here is not to evaluate Irenaeus as a source on the Valentinians and other gnostic groups, but to come to understand how his view on Jesus in Gethsemane is fundamentally shaped by opponents. As they were the stimulus for his thought, it is likely that what Irenaeus writes also reflects the way in which they conceived of this story.

1 *Irenäus von Lyon, Epideixis, Adversus Haereses. Darlegung der Apostolischen Verkündigung. Gegen die Häresien* (ed. and tr. Norbert Brox; Fontes Christiani 8/1; Freiburg: Herder, 1993), 101–12. For Book 3, the text is taken from *Irénée de Lyon, Contre Les Hérésies Livre III. Tome II. Édition Critique, Texte et Traduction* (ed. Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau; SC 211. Paris: Cerf, 2002). Translations of Book 1 are taken from *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heretics* (tr. and annotated Dominic J. Unger; ACW 55; New York: The Newman Press, 1992). For the other books, the translations are taken from ANF 1 with minor changes. Only some parts of Iraneus have been preserved in Greek, but it is available in a complete Latin translation from the fourth century.

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## 12.1 Context Matters

The first occurrence is found within a context (*Haer*. 1.8–9) where Irenaeus holds against the Valentinians that they use the scriptures in a cento-like way, taking the texts out of their contexts and stitching together pieces according to their own system and order:

> Valentinians as well as centoists make a game of Scrabble out of the texts at their disposal. In *Haer*. 2.14.2, Irenaeus once again uses cento composition to illustrate his critical stand vis-à-vis the Valentinians. He holds against them that they are sewing together a motley garment out of a heap of miserable rags, thus furnishing themselves with a cloak which is really not their own. Stripped of the figurative speech, Irenaeus is accusing the Valentinians for having kept style and vocabulary intact, but altered the substance.[2]

For Gethsemane, this implies that Irenaeus insists that this story from the life of Jesus can only be understood rightly within its proper context. The cento analogy that Irenaeus uses against his opponents is a clear statement that Gethsemane can only be rightly understood within the wider context of Christian faith. This goes beyond the issue of a biblical context; the idea of *regula fidei* looms large in this passage and the lack of this context is the main reason that heretics, as Irenaeus considers them to be, go astray. The story is open to different interpretations if cut loose from Christian doctrine, as defined by Scripture and tradition together. Gethsemane is caught up in immense theological controversies that deeply influence the way Jesus' agony is interpreted:

> Also the sufferings which she (Achamoth) endured, they assert (φάσκουσιν), the Lord pointed out on the cross. In this way, when he exclaimed: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" he recalled that Wisdom was deserted by the light and was hindered by Limit from making advancing any farther. Her grief he manifested when he said (τὴν δὲ λύπην αὐτῆς ἐν τῷ εἰπεῖν): "My heart is very sorrowful, even unto death;" her fear when he said (τὸν δὲ φόβον ἐν τῷ εἰπεῖν), "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me;" and her perplexity (ἀπορίαν) when he said, "And what shall I say, I do know not" (*Haer*. 1.8.2)

2 Sandnes, *The Gospel 'According to Homer and Virgil,'* 134; see also pp. 124–40.

### 12.1.1 *The Passions of Achamoth*

Irenaeus here renders a view formulated (φάσκουσιν) by the people he opposes. The Gethsemane discourse that the present study construes is here a matter of a real dispute. This biblical pastiche consists of Jesus' cry on the cross (Mark 15:34par), his emotional agony in Gethsemane (Mark 14:34par), and the cup prayer (Mark 14:36par), and John 12:27, which is rendered in a way adapting it to the others. It is worth noting that the Valentinians according to Irenaeus most likely identified John 12:27 as a Gethsemane text. The biblical passages together form the basis for a portrayal of Jesus as anguished, afraid, and perplexed.[3] Together they depict Jesus as being out of control with regard to emotions; the list echoes Stoic lists of passions.[4]

This catena of texts about Jesus and his passion substantiates the gnostic scheme on Sophia or Wisdom.[5] *Plerôma* or Fullness was made up of thirty Aeons of which Wisdom was the last. She rebelled and experienced passion in her desire to understand the incomprehensible Father. Had not Horus (Limit) put a stop to her, she would have been dissolved. At the cross her desires were crucified.[6] She was thus restored to Fullness; then Christ and the Holy Spirit were sent to teach that the Father was incomprehensible. Sophia's desires were left below as Achamoth. Since the Savior was incapable of suffering, the passion-driven statements from the gospels are thus witnesses to Achamoth, not the Lord. She experienced herself in this way, suffering from passions. Her grief, fear, anguish, and perplexity are all revealed through the words of Jesus. Gethsemane is included in the Passion Narrative, but it is not really about Jesus; these are words expressed on behalf of Achamoth, the manifestation of Wisdom's desires left behind, out of which the World was created. What we see at work is that Jesus is distanced from sayings or reactions associated with passions and desires.

In *Haer*. 1.8.2, Irenaeus clearly links up with 1.4.1–2 regarding how the material world is made up of the passions of Achamoth. Her passions separated her from Fullness and excluded her from the light; this is traditional and common gnostic mythology. God pitied her on the cross and left her with some fragrance

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3 In Luke 21:25, ἀπορία is closely connected to anxiety.

4 Einar Thomasen, *The Spiritual Seed: The Church of the 'Valentinians'* (Nag Hammadi & Manichean Studies 60; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 291. See Chapter 4.9 of the present study.

5 On the gnostic cosmology assumed here, see Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (London: Routledge, 1997), 22–25 and Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 268–73.

6 This doctrine finds a point of departure in Pauline sayings like Gal 5:24 ("And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"); cf. *Ign. Rom*. 7:2.

of immortality, called Christ or the Holy Spirit. She therefore sought the light from which she had fallen, but she was unable to reach it as she fell into all kinds of passions. She suffered from grief (λύπη), she was fearful (φόβος), and suffered from perplexity (ἀπορία). All these emotions were enveloped in ignorance (ἐν ἀγνοίᾳ, *Haer*. 1.4.1). From these passions of fear, grief, tears, and laughter the corporeal world (ὕλη) came into being. When she recalled the world from which she had fallen "she would fear or be perplexed and bewildered (πάλιν ἐφοβεῖτο, ἄλλοτε δὲ διηπόρει καὶ ἐξίστατο)" (*Haer*. 1.4.2); she was out of control. All of this corresponds to how Gethsemane is addressed in *Haer*. 1.8.2.

## 12.2 Affected by Mary

The second instance where Gethsemane comes into play is in *Haer*. 3.22.2:

> Superfluous, too, in that case is his descent into Mary; for why did he come down into her if he were to take nothing of her (*nihil incipiebat sumere ab ea*/εἰ μηδὲν ἔμελλε λήμψεσθαι παρ᾽αὐτῆς)? Still further, if he had taken nothing of Mary (*nihil sumpsisset ex Maria*/ μηδὲν εἰλήφει παρὰ τῆς Μαρίας), he would never have availed himself of those kinds of foods which are derived from the earth, by which that body which has been taken from the earth is nourished (*a terra sumptum est nutritetur corpus*/ ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ληφθὲν τρέφεται σῶμα); nor would he have hungered, fasting those forty days like Moses and Elias, unless his body was craving after its own proper nourishment; nor again, would John his disciple have said when writing of him, "But Jesus, being wearied with the journey, was sitting [to rest];[7] nor would David have proclaimed of him beforehand, "They have added to the grief of my wounds;"[8] nor would he have wept over Lazarus,[9] nor have sweated great drops of blood;[10] nor have declared, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful;[11] nor, when his side was pierced, would there have come forth blood and water.[12] For all these are tokens of the

7 John 4:6.

8 Ps 69:27. It is worth noting how this citation from the psalm is included in a catena of texts from Jesus' life according to the gospel accounts. We are reminded of how Ps 22 worked autobiographically with Justin; see Chapter 11.

9 John 11:35.

10 Luke 22:44.

11 Mark 14:34par.

12 John 19:34.

> flesh (*omnia signa carnis quae a terra sumpta est*/πάντα σύμβολα σαρκὸς τῆς ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς εἰλημμένης) which have been derived from the earth, which he has recapitulated in himself, bearing salvation to his own creation (*suum plasma*/τὸ ἴδιον πλάσμα).

The immediate context of this is 3.22.1, which reports that those who "allege that he took nothing from the virgin" (*qui dicunt eum nihil ex virgine accepisse*/οἱ λέγοντες αὐτὸν μηδὲν ἀνειληφέναι ἐκ τῆς παρθένου) are in error. This is, he says, to deny Jesus' carnal heritage and to question his likeness (*similitiudo*) with human beings. Thus the theological issue that brings Irenaeus to refer to Gethsemane is incarnation or the true humanity of Jesus Christ: to what extent was Jesus affected by Mary or Adam? His opponents advocated a docetic view aimed at restricting the implications of this piece of tradition as much as possible. Irenaeus has already raised the issue in *Haer*. 3.16.1; he finds himself confronted with somewhat varying gnostic views on this issue.

He holds against his opponents that Jesus Christ is separated into a dual figure. According to this thinking, Jesus was born and suffered, and he is to be distinguished from the Christ who descended upon him and who then returned to the origin above (*Haer*. 3.16.6–7). This approach is similar to 1.8.2, where the passions witnessed to in the story of Gethsemane were attributed to Sophia or Achamoth. This dichotomy served to exempt Christ from the cup prayer of Gethsemane and the emotions that caused that prayer. For others it was a matter of reducing to nothing Jesus' involvement with humanity; this parallels 3.22.1's voicing of such classical Docetism:

> *Hoc autem dicere est et putative apparuisse eum tamquam hominem, cum non esset homo, et factum eum hominem, nihil adsumentum de homine. Si enim non accepit ab homine substantiam carnis, neque homo factus est neque filius hominis* ... (But this is to say, that he also appeared putatively as man when He was not man, and that He was made man while taking nothing from man. For if he did not receive the substance of flesh from a human being, he neither was made man nor the son of man ...).

The Latin verbs *putare* and *apparere* insert a distance into the relationship between Jesus and incarnation. Incarnation may then, in principle, be assumed, but it has no consequences and Jesus is left unaffected by it.[13] It is, of course, worth observing that Irenaeus draws on a catena of texts culled from all four gospels, thus proving his case widely and fundamentally in the

13 1 John 4:1–3 lies at the heart of Irenaeus' interpretation.

tradition of the church.[14] In the words of D. Jeffrey Bingham: "The same truth he believes is expressed in more than one Gospel, but in different language."[15]

This means that the discussion of "taking something from Mary" firmly belongs to the discussion of Christ as Adam, as true man. Hence, Paul's Adam-Christ typology (Rom 5:12–21 and 1 Cor 15:45–47) appear in *Haer*. 3.22.1–3. Mary is included in the restoration theology, according to which incarnation serves to bring creation back to God's purpose. In the passages referred to here, Irenaeus speaks in terms of *sumere* or *accipere* and λαμβάνειν and their cognates of being affected by Mary, Adam, earth, creation and humanity. Thereby the creation story of Genesis 2 comes to mind, and is referred to by Irenaeus: man was taken from earth (ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς, Gen 2:7). Creation theology resonates in and informs Irenaeus' argument on incarnation, and the passions in Gethsemane are to him proofs of Jesus' true humanity. Jesus experienced the consequences of being "taken from earth."[16] The grief he felt and voiced on that occasion demonstrates that he was indeed affected by incarnation, as do his hunger, his cries and mourning, his fatigue, etc. Incarnation makes itself manifest according to Irenaeus; it is not invisible and unnoticed. Throughout, he sets himself against gnostic opponents who clearly found the portrayal of Jesus in Gethsemane as an obstacle to their views on passion and in need of being accommodated to gnostic cosmology. Their Savior was not capable of suffering physically, as he did in Gethsemane according to the fourfold Gospel.

#### 12.2.1 *Elusive Gethsemane*

We noted an emphatic elusiveness with regard to Gethsemane among Irenaeus' opponents. This attitude comes to the fore in many sources, some of which merit deeper examination. Many factors contributed to the fact that the Gethsemane discourse in the second century grew stronger and more contrastive. The anomaly of this tradition within the gospels was a constant challenge. Furthermore, the fact that early Christianity did not form a monolithic movement, but was divided into groups—some notably disparate in their views—had a particular bearing on how questionable parts of the Christian legacy were interpreted. One such issue was the many questions pertaining to the humanity of the Son of God. In his refutation of Celsus, Origen makes

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14 See above on the term "Scripture."

15 Bingham, *Irenaeus, Use of Matthew's Gospel*, 93.

16 Norbert Brox, *Offenbarung, Gnosis und gnostischer Mythos bei Irenäus von Lyon* (Salzburger Patristische Studien 1; Salzburg: Anton Pustet: 1966), 186–89 emphasizes that the connection between creation and incarnation was fundamental to Irenaeus' idea of *recapitulatio*, of bringing creation to its fulfillment.

the point that Celsus has failed to notice that some Christians—heretics as he call them—say "that Jesus suffered these agonies in appearance only and not in reality" (*Cels*. 2.16).[17] Although the immediate reference here is the passion, there is no doubt that this claim was extended into the agony in Gethsemane. We also noted that this was Celsus' entrance into Gethsemane; it was impossible to reconcile the claim of Jesus' being divine with the Gethsemane story. This scene was disreputable to divinity; it was not only too human, it was actually shameful for men of even some culture to act as Jesus did.[18]

Jesus, whether divine or human or both, became a crystallization point for reading the Gethsemane incident for any number of groups with different agendas. Generally, with no specific reference to Gethsemane, it is evident that in New Testament passages issues pertaining to aspects of "incarnation" were already on the agenda. The emphasis on the Logos becoming human (John 1:14; 6:53–54) invites a mirror-reading. These passages likely bear witness to the fact that negotiations on their implications were underway; this is affirmed in 1 John 1:1–4 and becomes more explicit in Ignatius of Antioch's epistles.[19] With Justin and Irenaeus, it is evident that such disagreements and negotiations affected the Gethsemane story as well; in fact, that story became a key passage in that regard. The kind of humanity that this incident implied was to many not only problematic but also even offensive and shameful. Many Christians shared Celsus' view on this issue. Such views have come down as Docetism or docetic Christology, implying some kinds of evasiveness vis-a-vis the humanity of Jesus.

Docetic Christology is not a group-specific characteristic; it applies to various factions. It is equally certain that we cannot lump the advocates together under the umbrella of Gnosticism. Unfortunately, we do not have sources engaging Gethsemane in a group-specific way, although some features appear to have figured rather commonly. Justin Martyr makes no attempt to identify whom he targets, although he clearly envisages an opposition. Irenaeus is certainly more specific, but as for Gethsemane in particular, it is hardly possible to provide a group-specific study based on his distinctions between groups. Even within the Valentinian groups, variations can be demonstrated, but the available sources hardly make it possible to apply these to Gethsemane in particular.[20]

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17 SC 132:328.15–16.

18 See Chapter 4.1.4 of the present study.

19 See for example Ign. *Trall*. 9–10; *Smyrn*. 2.

20 Thomassen, *The Spiritual Seed*, 503–504.

The common feature that united many groups that on other questions were separated was the evasive or elusive presence of Jesus in Gethsemane; this was, as pointed out above, not at all a late phenomenon. A duality between what was apparent and real, what was physical and spiritual, what was Jesus and what was Christ was seen as a helpful strategy both in retaining a story handed down to them and simultaneously accommodating it to their wider concepts. This chapter addresses some key texts that represent this stream of the tradition, with no claim that they belonged to one group or formed a coherent opposition. What the texts have in common is the fact that they give witness to Jesus' evasive presence in the garden and provide an ideological context that forms a backdrop for understanding Justin and Irenaeus. Together they affirm that, even by the second century, the discourse on Gethsemane was inextricably tied up with the issue of Christ's humanity.

## 12.3 Substituted Body

In VII,3 *Apocalypse of Peter* 80–84,[21] Peter is instructed about the great misunderstanding that it was the real Jesus who was arrested and crucified. This instruction is tied into the events of arrest and crucifixion, which makes it pertinent to ask about Gethsemane. Peter is taught that these events only appeared to happen to Jesus, who said: "But me they cannot touch.... It is *another* whose feet and hands they are striking" (80–81).[22] The true Jesus is glad and is laughing while hanging on the tree, as only his fleshly parts that are affected by the sufferings. This corporeal Jesus is the substitute for the true or real Jesus and has come in his likeness. The blind fail to grasp that this body is only a substitute. Jesus is Spirit and *Plerôma*, filled with the Holy Spirit and unaffected by suffering and pain. In this perception of the bodily Jesus the ideal of *apatheia*, a companion throughout this study, looms large.

Gethsemane as such is not addressed here, although the narrative context brings it to mind. Without being explicitly mentioned, the garden scene has left some marks on the text; it indicates that it is all about "fulfilling the Father's will," which runs very much in accordance with the second part of the Gethsemane prayer rendered in the Synoptic Gospels. The "coming of those who bring judgment" (the blind) brings to mind Mark 14:42 and Matt 26:46, about Judas' closing in. In precisely this context, the text in question says that

21 NHL 340–45.

22 See also VII, 2 *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* 55–56 (NHL 332). All the suffering there is only apparent.

Peter suffered from cowardice. This is probably a reminiscence of his falling asleep and formulated with the help of a key notion at home in the discourse on Gethsemane, namely manly courage or cowardice.[23]

Jung-Sik Cha has aptly formulated the situation with regard to Gethsemane in apocryphal and gnostic literature:

> In general, the apocryphal and gnostic literature shows meager attestation of the Gethsemane tradition. One can only find a few indirect references or allusions to it, but these do not play a pivotal part in the overall stream of the narrative.... This scanty witness by the apocryphal and gnostic literature to the Gethsemane tradition is further to be explained by their increasing interest in the image of Jesus as an exalted redeemer figure, no longer suffering on the cross.[24]

## 12.4 A Man Leaving No Footprints

This observation finds general confirmation in the *Acts of John* as well, but I think Cha overlooks how Jesus' identity is being negotiated in a way that is highly relevant to Gethsemane. *Acts John* 90–120 is helpful in grasping how Gethsemane traditions are transformed. In this long passage, Jesus' true, polymorphic identity is revealed; Jesus appears in many forms and is elusive at best when it comes to his humanity (cf. 87–89). According to Pieter J. Lalleman,

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23 It is worth noting a comment made by Chadwick, *Origen Contra Celsum*, 462n.6; according to *Cels*. 8.15, Celsus in his polemics makes reference to “the heavenly dialogue,” a text of uncertain provenance, but probably of “gnostic” origin. See Howard M. Jackson, “The Setting and Sectarian Provenance of the Fragment of the ‘Celestial Dialogue’ Preserved by Origen from Celsus's Ἀληθὴς Λόγος,” *HTR* 85 (1992): 282–84. This text distinguishes between those who are at the well and those who go into it (cf. *Gos. Thom*. 74), which is about different levels of understanding. The “heavenly dialogue” challenges the readers: “Why..., are you lacking in daring?'—‘You are wrong, for I have courage and a sword (πάρεστι γάρ μοι θάρσος καὶ μάχαιρα).” Lona, *Wahre Lehre*, 435–36 picks up the comment made by Chadwick, saying that this text refers to Luke 22:38 and “[a]uf diese Szene der Leidensgeschichte spielt der Text an.” Chadwich and Lona base their comments on Luke 22:48 alone, but miss the importance of courage there. This virtue is at home in the Gethsemane discourse and it is likely not an accident that it comes into the picture through a reference to Luke, which is the passage that comes closest to the cultural sensibility of courage. As the Savior has both courage and sword, so must the believers also dare to dip themselves into the well; thus runs the argument of *Cels*. 8.15.

24 Cha, “Confronting Death,” 310.

the message of the polymorphous nature of the Lord is clear: "Christ was not human. Polymorphy functions as a means to illustrate docetic Christology."[25]

John the Apostle is the figure who tells the story of his life with the Lord. In *Acts John* 90, he says that Jesus once took him, along with James and Peter, to the mountain where he used to pray. The context leaves no doubt that this is the transfiguration scene, clearly crucial for defining the true identity of Jesus. However, the transfiguration scene is assimilated to Gethsemane, or rather Gethesemane is assimilated to it.[26] Jesus' going to the Mount of Olives to pray is with regard to the transfiguration found only in Luke (9:28) and connects with how Luke writes about Gethsemane. The piece of information that Jesus went here to pray out of custom (εἰς τὸ ὄρος ὅπου ἦν αὐτῷ ἔθος εὔχεσθαι)[27] also appears in Luke 22:39. Other reminiscences of Gethsemane are the role played by temptation (see below), the fact that Jesus and the disciples sing a hymn before his arrest (94), echoes of his arrival in the garden according to Mark and Matthew (Mark 14:26; Matt 26:30), and finally, that the disciples when faced with the mystery of the cross (see below) were like men led astray or fast asleep, each fleeing their own way:[28] ἡμεῖς ὥσπερ πλανηθέντες ἢ καὶ ἀποκοιμηθέντες ἄλλος ἀλλοχόσε πεφευγειμεν (97). These hints are indirect, but together suffice to assert that Gethsemane is incorporated into the transformation of Jesus' passion taking place here.

The transfiguration scene is elaborated by a scene most likely inspired by Gethsemane. It notes that after having seen Jesus surrounded by glorious light, they were taken aside by him for prayer. What he prayed for can only be inferred from the wider context. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, went up close to see him. He looked at him from behind, which brings to mind Moses' encountering the divine in Exodus 33. Jesus was naked and did not look like a man at all: ἄνθρωπον δὲ οὐδὲ ὅλως (90). What John envisaged here is in fact an epiphany shaped to accord with biblical motifs from such texts such as Ezek 1–3. Fear (φόβος) seized John as he watched this and Jesus, in the guise of a child pulling his beard so that this pain remained for thirty days, said to him: "Let it be your

25 Pieter J. Lalleman, "Polymorphy of Christ," in *The Apocryphal Acts of John* (ed. Jan N. Bremmer; Kampen: Pharos, 1995), 108. Such Christology also owes much to the fundamental distinction between body and soul, expressed for example by Anaxarchus while he was being beaten: "you are not beating me" (Chapter 4.2 of the present study).

26 Thus also Cha, "Confronting Death," 303–304.

27 For the Greek text, see Richard A. Lipsius and Maximilian, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha. Vol. 2.1* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1959).

28 This is also a Gethsemane motif in all the gospels (Mark 14: 50–52; Matt 26:56; Luke 22:54; John 18:8–9), although in John it becomes a starting point for the narrative unfolding of the implications of Jesus' death.

(concern) from now on not to tempt him that cannot be tempted (μὴ πειράζειν τὸν ἀπείραστον, 90)." It comes as a surprise that Jesus takes John to present him with a temptation. If, however, Gethsemane lurks in the background here, this is less surprising, since that is a story in which Jesus found himself tempted. Now it is emphasized that Jesus can never be tempted in any way. Temptations are equal to a denial of his true identity, of the fact that he is *not* a man. This insight is further strengthened in 93, which states that Jesus' body was no real body, but immaterial, as though he did not exist at all. John wanted to see his footprints, but he never found them. Jesus left no traces on the earth.

*Acts John* 97–102 presents the mystery of the cross. It begins in a way that militates against John 19:26–27, 34–37, where John's presence and witnessing of the crucifixion is assumed. In the present story, John did not wait to see the suffering, but instead fled to a cave at the Mount of Olives and wept there. Christ then appeared to him, having no shape but coming only as a type of voice: "John, for the people below in Jerusalem I am being crucified and pierced with lances and reeds and given vinegar and gall to drink. But to you I am speaking, and Listen to what I speak" (97). Jesus says that he is not the man on the cross (99), since "I am wholly with the Father, and the Father with me" (100). Johannine Christology and metaphors (see particularly 98) resonate here and serve to dismiss Jesus from suffering. This section closes with John's going down from the mountain, laughing when people told him that Jesus suffered (102). The laughter is indicative of a counterclaim in a discourse in which Gethsemane is also present.

Although Gethsemane issues are not raised explicitly, two important features intimately connected with this scene from the life of Jesus are involved. Most important is the question of Jesus' humanity. Jesus is in this regard not merely evasive; it is even *denied* that he was human and so any kind of suffering was inappropriate for him. There is no room for the agony of Gethsemane within such parameters. What is here implicit but not to be overlooked is stated openly in the early medieval *Acts of Pilate*. There, Satan is involved in a dialogue with Hades about Jesus. According to Satan, Jesus brought upon him and his associated demons much trouble during his ministry. Satan, however, affirms that Jesus is nothing but a man: "For I know that he is a man, and I have heard him saying, 'My soul is very sorrowful, even to the death (2 (18).1)."[29] Here the agony of Jesus is explicitly taken as a proof of human weakness

29 *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* Based on M.R. James (ed. J.K. Elliot; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). It is this kind of observation that triggered Macarius to consider Gethsemane and the agony a trap aimed at fooling the devil; see Chapters 4.8.3–4.8.6 in the present study.

incompatible with divinity. This is very much in line with what we have already seen at play with Celsus and Julian.[30]

At points, the relevant passages in *Acts of John* bring to mind the genre of Gospel harmony, since it combines some of these traditions rather freely. As usual when this happens, it appears that a Johannine-inspired Christology prevails. Additionally, the fact that Jesus is divine and not human implies that any idea of his being tempted is denied as well. The way Jesus' identity is portrayed here precludes temptations from taking place. The temptation involved in the Gethsemane traditions is alienated and found incompatible with his true identity. This is a point of convergence with John's Gospel, but in *Acts of John* the agony is also out of place, which is not the case in the Fourth Gospel.[31]

30 See Chapters 4.14 and 4.5.2 in the present study.

31 See Chapter 8 of the present study.

CHAPTER 13

# The Gospel of the Savior (Papyrus Berolinensis 22220): Intercession in Heavenly Gethsemane

I have argued that in John 17 the Gethsemane prayer is reconfigured and transformed into an intercession rather than a petition concerned about Jesus' own needs. Seen from an insider's perspective, the Gethsemane prayer was not really about Jesus himself but altruistic and intercessionary. We now turn to a relatively early text where this perspective on Gethsemane is developed in an idiosyncratic way.

## 13.1 Heavenly Vision

In 1997 some Coptic manuscripts were found in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin. These fragments have been labeled the remains of a Gospel, and have been called the *Gospel of the Savior*, probably composed in the late second century.[1] The fragments found in Coptic depend on an earlier Greek version. This literature renders dicta of Jesus and dialogues with his disciples taking place immediately before his passion. The introduction which Jesus according to Acts 1 gave them after his resurrection now takes place before even the passion, let alone between it and the resurrection. This gospel is a heavenly vision, inspired by the transfiguration scene in the Synoptic Gospels (28–34). The incidents from Jesus' life take place in heaven and are witnessed by disciples who are "spiritual bodies" (29). In the words of Jörg Frey: "... das Gebet Jesu nicht auf Erden erfolgt, im Garten Gethsemane, sondern in der himmlischen Welt, in der unmittelbaren Präsenz Gottes, und dass die Apostel visionär Zeugen dieses Geschehens und gerade darin 'mit Apostelschaft bekleidet' werden."[2] This perspective implies that the most embarrassing pieces of Jesus' life story are softened: "Der Anstoss an dem folgenden Kreuzesweg ist mit dieser Vision

1 For *editio princeps*, see *Gospel of the Savior: A New Ancient Gospel* (Ed. and tr. Charles W. Hedrick and Paul Mirecki; California Classical Library; Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 1999), 1–25. For introductory questions, see also Frey, "Leidenskampf und Himmelsreise," 71–82.

2 Frey, "Leidenskampf und Himmelsreise," 84–85.

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von vornherein abgebogen."[3] The style brings to mind the Johannine farewell speeches (chs. 14–17). Elements from Matthew and John often merge, as is the case in the conversation the Savior has with his disciples after the Last Supper:[4]

> 11 So now [while] you [are] in the body, do not let matter (ὕλη) rule over you! 12 *Rise, let us go hence; for my betrayer is at hand*. 13 "And you will *flee* and fall away because of me. 14 You will all flee and [leave me] alone; 15 yet I am not alone, for my *Father* is with me. 16 I and my Father are one and the same. 17 For it is written, '*I will strike the shepherd, and* (p. 99) *the sheep of the flock will be scattered*.' 18 So I am the good shepherd. 19 I lay down my life for you. 20 You too, lay down your lives for your [friends], so that you might please my Father! 21 For there is no commandment greater than this, that I should [lay down my] life [for] humankind. 22 For this reason my Father loves me. 23 Because I *accomplished* [*his*] *will*. 24 Because [I am] divine and yet I [became human . . .]

## 13.2 Committed

The apostles are warned against the controlling power of material things and passions. According to Charles W. Hedrick and Paul A. Mirecki, this may indicate an "ascetic, or even a gnostic motif."[5] However, this motif may be justified without reference to gnostic thoughts, as it was a cultural commonplace. What is interesting from the perspective of the present study is the fact that a passage that is reminiscent of Gethsemane traditions[6] is connected to the

3 Frey, "Leidenskampf und Himmelsreise," 83. According to Lorne R. Zelyck, *John Among the Other Gospels: The Reception of the Fourth Gospel in the Extra-Canonical Gospels* (WUNT 2.347; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 127, 137–38, this document uses John's Gospel "to diminish his fleshly suffering." Zelyck points out that by having the agony taking place in heaven, Jesus does not really suffer at all in the flesh. The sufferings thus become only for the purpose of glorification.

4 The translation and references are given according to Stephen Emmel, "Preliminary Reedition and Translation of the Gospel of the Savior: New Light on the Strasbourg Coptic Gospel and the Stauros-Text from Nubia," *Apocrypha* 18 (2003), which is a revision of the translation given in his "The Recently Published Gospel of the Savior ("Unbekanntes Berliner Evangelium"): Righting the Order of Pages and Events." *HTR* 95 (2002): 45–72.

5 Hedrick and Mirecki, *Gospel of the Savior*, 92. They consider these fragments to be influenced by what came to be known as Gnosticism, but admit that "Gnostic motifs in the *Gospel of the Savior* are simply too general to allow such an identification" (p. 24).

6 I have italicized the words and phrases that contribute particularly to this reminiscence.

topos "mastery of desires." This means that Gethsemane is construed here with a view to a philosophical discussion with much impact precisely on Jesus' performance in the garden.

Line 12 is clearly taken from Mark 14:42/Matt 26:46, with an addition taken from John 14:31 ("from this place"). The synoptic background is obvious in the mentioning of the betrayer (Mark 14:42/Matt 26:46). The solitude of Jesus in their stories is developed so that Jesus says that they will all flee from him, picking up on Mark 14:29, 50 and Matt 26:33, 50b. However, with reference to Johannine Christology, Jesus' solitude in Gethsemane is denied. The Coptic αλλα introduces a marked contrast here with a reference to the Father (John 10:30; 17:21), but John 16:32 is even more relevant: "The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone (μὲ μόνον ἀφῆτε) because the Father is with me (ὁ πατὴρ μετ' ἐμοῦ)." This passage sounds like one of the diffusions of Gethsemane in John's Gospel.[7] The arrival of "the hour," the disciples who will be scattered which in Mark 14:27/Matt 26:31 cites Zech 13:7, and the solitude of Jesus indicate that John 16:32 was taken in that way by the author of this gospel. The practice of gospel harmonies, not necessarily a fixed text, comes into play here. The intimate relationship between Father and Son in the Fourth Gospel leave no place for Jesus in solitude, left alone even by his Father. The merging of texts proceeds from a concept of unity and harmony, but does in fact render void a text like Mark 14:41 (ἀπέχει).

In speaking about the shepherd, Zechariah 13:7, which in terms of context is very close to Gethsemane in Mark and Matthew, is linked up with the Johannine dictum "I am the good shepherd" who will lay down his life.[8] The interweaving of Mark and Matthew with Johannine Christology leaves Jesus as a person fully devoted to the task assigned to him, laying down his life for the salvation of human beings. He is in no way controlled by passions. Hence, the cup prayer does not figure here, although it is quoted and commented upon elsewhere among these fragments (see below). Solitude is also included, but not vis-a-vis the Father. There is no hint of a conflict between Father and Son;

7 See Chapter 8.5 in the present study. Nestle-Aland 28th edition points out that connection in the margin.

8 The idea of the Good Shepherd is to be understood in terms of dying nobly for the benefit of others; see Neyrey, "The 'Noble Shepherd.' " That this connects to Gethsemane here is worth observing since the issue of noble death was so important to the discourse on Gethsemane. This must be considered against Zelyck, *John Among the Other Gospels*, 131–32, who says that John 10 has been brought into the discussion solely because of common terminology.

on the contrary, the two are fully united. When the author of this gospel makes use of the method of gospel harmony, John's Gospel dominates.

### 13.2.1 *Heavenly Agony and Intercession*

In spite of the fragmentary nature of what is preserved from this heavenly vision, key passages from Gethsemane traditions are identifiable. The translation given has italicized those elements that derive from it, Mark 14:39 and Matt 26:39, 42–44. I agree with Jörg Frey, who notes the following: "Es kann daher—trotz aller Lücken des Textes—kein Zweifel daran bestehen, dass hier das Gethsemane-Gebet verarbeitet ist: Dreimal betet Jesus zum Vater, und er bittet dass der Kelch—wenn möglich—von ihm genommen wurde."[9]

The context is a heavenly vision including angels, archangels, and cherubim. In accordance with the vision of Revelation 4, they cast crowns down at the feet of Jesus. The heavenly beings are deeply disturbed since the Son finds himself in distress: "[... why] are you weeping and [distressed], such that [the] entire angelic host[10] [is alarmed]?" (45). To this heavenly concern for his agony, the Son responds:

> 46 [And] he (the Son) replied [in this manner], [... 5 lines untranslatable ...] [...] ... [...] 47 *I am* [*greatly distressed* ...] kill [...] at the hands of the [people of] Israel. 48 *O my* [*father*], *if it be* [*possible*], *let this* [*cup*] *pass from me*! 49 Let [me] be [...] at the hands of some other [...] people who [...] if [...] Israel [... 3+/- lines untranslatable ...]." 50 [The Father replied ... 3+/- lines untranslatable ... so that] salvation [might come] to the entire world. 51 [Then] again the Son *threw himself down* at his Father's feet, [saying], 52 "O my father ... 5 lines untranslatable ...] to die with joy and pour out my blood for the human race. 53 But *I weep greatly* on account of my beloved ones, [Abraham] and Isaac [and] Jacob, [because on the] day of judgment [they will] stand, [whereas] I will sit upon [my] throne and pass [judgment] on the world, 54 [while they] say to me, "[... 8 lines untranslatable ...] the glory that was given to me [on] earth. 55 *O my* [*father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!"*] 56 [The *Father* replied] to him for [the] *second time*, 57 "[O my] son, you do not [... 28 lines untranslatable ...]." 58 The Son [replied] for *the* [*third*] *time*, 59 "*O* [*my father*], *if* [...] [... 32 +/- lines untranslatable ...]." 60 [... 32 +/-

9 Frey, "Leidenskampf und Himmelsreise," 84.

10 This context may well have appeared appropriate due to the angel in Luke 22:43, which in fact conveys a heavenly concern about Jesus' agony.

> lines untranslatable ...] [... 29 lines untranslatable ...] he [came to] *complete* [the service until he returns] to them. (*p. 105*)

While the bodies of the apostles were asleep in Gethsemane, in spirit they ascended to heaven and saw incidents from the Gospels taking place there and from the heavenly perspective.[11] The similarities to Matthew and John are numerous, but the reader must keep in mind throughout that heaven is the place where these events take place. Charles W. Hedrick and Paul A. Mirecki compare this to Enoch, who received his vision while asleep (*1 En.* 13:10; 14:2).[12] The primary perspective on the Gethsemane prayer is that it is intercession and a struggle with God for that purpose. Claire Clivaz rightly draws attention to the dialogical style which amounts to "une lutte contre Dieu,"[13] which may be compared to Jacob's struggle (Gen 32) and Col 4:12–13, where intercession as ἀγών is mentioned. Thus Jesus' own death, which is even in this text yet to happen, is not central here; the deaths of others, more precisely Israel, are the focus.

As suggested by H.M. Schenke, the backdrop of the prayer is that Jesus understands what his death will bring upon the Jews.[14] Knowing that his death will be caused by his own people, Israel, a fact that paves the way for their destruction (see Luke 21:20–24; 23:28–31), he now prays for their rescue. He prays that they will not suffer the dire consequences of having brought his death upon him. Hence, he prays that his death—which he does not try to escape at all—will be caused by other people.[15] Thus, the prayer that the cup pass from him is actually that Israel, his fellow Jews, should not bring the death upon him. His sadness and distress is caused by his concern for them. The cup prayer brings to mind Romans 9–11, especially Paul's emotional prayers in 9:1–4 and 10:1. It is worth noting that Paul says that this prayer is his λύπη: "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart." Jesus' falling to the ground, weeping, and uttering intercessional prayers represents a stereotypical figure of intensive prayers for Israel.[16] Jesus in Gethsemane joins the ranks of those pious

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11 This brings to mind the insider's perspective that I worked out in John's Gospel, irrespective of many other differences between the sources; see Chapter 8.3 in the present study.

12 Hedrick and Mirecki, *Gospel of the Savior*, 108–109.

13 Clivaz, *L'Ange et la sueur de sang*, 569; see also pp. 301–302.

14 H.-M. Schenke, "Das sogenannte 'Unbekannte Berliner Evangelium,' " *ZAC* 2 (1998): 211.

15 Only in this way can the whole human race find salvation in his death. The logical problems implied if some other people should bring him to die are out of scope.

16 Hedrick and Mirecki, *Gospel of the Savior*, 110; see in particular Clivaz, *L'Ange et la sueur de sang*, 597–602; Clivaz, "Hebrews 5.7," 198–208 for this motif.

and righteous who have interceded on behalf of Israel. These intercessionary prayers are accompanied by strong emotions such as weeping and mourning.

However, it was not merely a tradition on Israel's intercessionary prayers that paved the way for construing the Gethsemane prayer in this way. More specifically, Zech 1:14–17's account of an angel's encouraging the prophet to pray for Israel is relevant. Through Luke's angel in his longer version, this text on interceding for Israel may have come into play. Furthermore, a composite approach to the gospels may also have furthered this effort. The high priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17 and the Gethsemane prayer may have merged, particularly so since the two prayers narratively occurs at more or less the same time within a Jesus biography, immediately before his being arrested in Gethsemane.[17] Thus John 17 guides the interpretation of the cup prayer and the whole scene, turning it into a prayer for others. This suggestion finds support in the fact that the unity between Father and Son is so emphatically stated in precisely that chapter of the Fourth Gospel.

Finally, the Lukan context in which Gethsemane is found may also be conducive to an intercessionary reading of the cup prayer. According to Luke 22:32a, Jesus intercedes for Peter and in 23:34a prays: "Forgive them . . . ." To this comes naturally that Luke 19:41–44 speaks about Jesus crying as he saw Jerusalem and prophesied its devastation, thus suggesting that the agony and Israel's destiny were connected. This is a wider biblical context into which the Gethsemane prayer fits. Hence, his λύπη is reserved for others, particularly for Israel, not for his own fate and destiny. His distress in Gethsemane is integrated into his death for the sins of the world, anticipating his passion on the cross. This is clearly stated in "I [am grieving ([Λ]ΥΠΗ) on account of the [sins] of the world" (78 [B 108]). The noun λύπη is here modified according to traditional theology on Jesus' death, excluded from his own concern about death and what he is about to face. This alteration of the λύπη motif is also stated very clearly in the passage cited above.

A model of harmony between the four gospels has great potential to rewrite and adapt more or less completely the Gethsemane scene and prayer. This is not surprising, due to the anomalous nature of the scene and prayer within the narrative accounts. The harmonious model applied in the *Gospel of the Savior* smooths out tensions and turns the weeping and anguish into anticipated passion and the prayer into an intercession for Israel that anticipates his death for human sins.

Two important features serve to alter the Gethsemane scene considerably as we know it from the Synoptic Gospels. First, the role given to the Fourth Gospel

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17 Chapter 8.4 in the present study.

here turns everything into glory. Second, the heavenly perspective makes an enormous difference. By taking the sleep of the disciples in Gethsemane as the point of departure for their being transferred to heavenly realities—in accordance with how visions appear in apocalyptic literature—the *Gospel of the Savior* hews very closely to Matthew while simultaneously changing it completely. The most important change is not that the cup prayer is interpreted as intercession, but that the whole scene takes place in heaven, like a transfiguration.

CHAPTER 14

# Origen: A More Severe Martyrdom

We have previously seen that *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* made use of the second part of Jesus' prayer and were almost negligent vis-a-vis the cup prayer.[1] This picture is altered as we now address Origen's treatise on martyrdom. In his *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, the cup prayer figures prominently, if with a certain turn. The treatise was composed about 235 CE to provide help for friends who had been arrested and facing a trial that was likely to lead to their deaths. Origen addresses them in conventional *paideia* terms. They are no longer "infants in Christ," but have advanced from the need of milk to solid food.[2] They have progressed in their faith and now appear as true and noble athletes (ὡς γενναῖος ἀθλητής, 1).[3] A great reward awaits them in heaven, and they are about to experience the fulfillment of Paul's dictum in Rom 7:24 ("who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" 3–4). They face a trial portrayed as ἀγών (*Mart.* 4).[4]

## 14.1 A Rhetorical Question

Within this conventional martyr theology, chapter 4 gives glimpses of emotions and concerns on the part of Christian martyrs themselves: "And if it happens that your soul feel some sadness, let the Spirit of Christ in us say to the soul that wishes, in so far as it can, to trouble Him also: 'Why art thou sad, O soul? And why dost thou trouble me? Hope in God, for I will give praise to Him" (4).[5] With references to Psalm 41, Origen envisages a conflict taking place within the martyr. This biblical psalm resonates in the Gethsemane traditions.[6] Origen uses the biblical citation that echoes Mark's and Matthew's versions of Jesus' anxiety in Gethsemane. However, he follows the setting of the psalm more

1 Chapter 3.5 in the present study.

2 For the *paideia* nature of the vocabulary on progress, see Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 9.

3 GCS 1:3.11. English translation in *Origen, Prayer. Exhortation to Martyrdom* (tr. and annotated by John J. O'Meara. Ancient Christian Writers 19; Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1954).

4 GCS 1:5.11.

5 GCS 1:5.17–20.

6 See Chapter 5.3.1 of the present study.

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closely, where this is a rhetorical question to be answered: there is no need to be anxious, since hope is fixed on God. Mark turns this question into a statement of a fact, so Origen goes behind Mark and Matthew to the biblical text on which they draw; the picture that emerges is by necessity notably different:

> But if we are not such that we can always preserve tranquility (τὸ ἀτάραχον), at least we should not allow our anxiety of soul (ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς ταραχὴ) to show itself and become obvious to believers. In this way we can still justify ourselves before God, saying to Him: "My God, my soul is troubled within myself (ἡ ψυχή μου ἐταράχθη)" (4).[7]

The rhetorical question of the biblical psalm paves the way for another Gethsemane interpretation. Although Origen urges his friends to stay calm and firm, he admittedly provides a glimpse of the personal turmoil that many martyrs are likely to have suffered before death. The text is revealing as to the importance of the impression made on others; distress should be hidden from fellow believers. This may, of course, be motivated by insight into psychology and the influence of examples, but it also brings to mind the iconic Philoctetes, who was blamed for making his pain known to others.[8]

When Origen then turns to rehearse the story of Eleazar and the seven brothers from 2 Macc 6–7 or 4 Maccabees (chs. 22–27), this knowledge of personal tragedies and worries is more or less forgotten. He sums up the story of these iconic martyrs as follows: "This love of God does not tolerate the coexistence (συμπολιτεύεται)[9] of human weakness, but drives it away as an enemy alien from the whole soul" (27).[10] For Origen, this story from Scripture is most helpful (χρησιμώτατα),[11] implying that the martyrs should be instructed to act likewise. The realistic knowledge of the martyrs' situation, though given only in a glimpse, is left behind entirely by this iconic story.

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7 GCS 1:5.25–6.1.

8 Chapter 4.2.1 of the present study.

9 "Coexistence" seems a weak tranlation here; pehaps "living together (as citizens) with" is better.

10 GCS 1:24.1–3.

11 This term is at home in pedagogical discussions in antiquity, referring to what beneficial knowledge may be gleaned from a text, example, or the like; see in particular Gnilka, *CHRÊSIS*. The principle of "what is beneficial or helpful" runs throughout the material presented in Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*.

## 14.2 The Cup Prayer

Chapters 28–29 address directly Jesus' prayer to have the cup pass from him. Origen takes his point of departure in Mark 10:38par, where "the cup" refers to martyrdom. From this he proceeds immediately to the cup prayer in Gethsemane, thus turning the latter into a text on martyrdom. The beginning of chapter 29 is revealing of an ongoing discourse:

> But perhaps because of the words: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me," someone who does not understand the meaning of Scripture thoroughly, may think that the Saviour was in a way even afraid (ἐδειλίασε) at the time of His passion. And if Jesus was afraid (ἐκείνου δειλιασάντος), a man may argue, how can a man remain steadfast (γενναῖος) forever? (*Mart.* 29)[12]

It is hardly a fictitious case that Origen imagines here. The text implies that Jesus' cup prayer could be taken, and most likely at times was taken, to have a damaging effect upon the ideal of martyrdom. The rhetorical question style of the text is indicative of a logic targeted by Origen. Jesus' fear in no way justifies that martyrs share such fear. Furthermore, the Greek terms included in the quotations enlist the Gethsemane prayer in a discussion on courage versus cowardice and nobility, the manly ideal pointed out elsewhere in this study.

Origen takes pains to refute the misunderstanding he envisages here. He asks rhetorically if Christ really was inferior to the psalmist speaking through Ps 26:1–3: "... The Lord is the protector of my life: of whom shall I be afraid (τίνα φοβηθήσομαι)?" (29).[13] This Old Testament passage prefigures Christ and it is unimaginable that Christ failed what this additional source conveys about his Gethsemane experience: "It is therefore impossible that the same man should say in fear (κατὰ δειλίαν): 'Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me, and with fortitude (ἀπὸ ἀνδρείας)': 'If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear (οὐ φοβηθήσομαι)" (29).[14] The Old Testament passage from which I have quoted only a part is a prophetic source pertaining directly to how the gospel traditions are to be understood, thus reminding us of the autobiographical Ps 22 in Justin.[15]

12 GCS 1:25.3–6.

13 GCS 1:25.8–13.

14 GCS 1:25.20–23.

15 Chapter 10 of the present study.

What Origen says is not easily reconciled with his argument in *Contra Celsum*, where precisely the cup prayer is seen as a direct consequence of incarnation. According to John Granger Cook, Origen in his refutation of Celsus viewed Jesus as "capable of all human feelings."[16] Origen even states that Jesus was not lord of his emotions.[17] Such observations are challenged by his *Exhortation to the Martyrs*. The most likely way out of this dilemma is to retrieve the philosophical distinction between passions and pre-passions and put the agony in the latter category, and this is certainly what Origen would do.[18]

### 14.2.1 *A Particular Cup*

Origen now adds his own reading, calling attention to the demonstrative τοῦτο that accompanies the cup ("*this* cup"). The demonstrative serves as an opportunity to introduce idiosyncratic interpretations of the cup.[19] In all the gospels except John, of course, this demonstrative is there. Since all martyrdoms eventually bring death upon their victims, Jesus must—so runs the logic here—have had a particular kind of martyrdom in mind here, not martyrdom in general. It is ordinary martyrdom that Jesus pleads to be excused from; for himself he wants another kind of martyrdom. Jesus envisions through this prayer something beyond normal martyrdom, a more severe martyrdom: ". . . asked . . . for a form of martyrdom much severer (τάχα βραύτερον), so that through this other chalice might be wrought a benefit more universal, one reaching to a greater number of men" (29).[20]

This interpretation reasons backwards, focusing on the soteriological consequences of Jesus' death. Since they were unique, his death was likewise unique. This logic paved the way for the idea of a more severe death as the reference to "the cup." In his refutation of Celsus, we saw that Origen emphasized the altruism of Jesus' death; his death for the benefit of humanity took its beginning in the agony in the garden.[21] Now, this comes into play again. If Jesus'

16 Cook, *The Interpretation of the New Testament in Greco-Roman Paganism*, 50.

17 Chapter 4.1.4 of the present study.

18 See Clivaz, *L'Ange et la sueur de sang*, 361. In the present study this distinction is elaborated on in the chapter on Jerome (18; see also 2.5.3).

19 We saw this with Macarius and will also see it with Jerome.

20 GCS 1:26:1–10.

21 Chapter 4.2. In his *Commentary on John's Gospel*, Origen emphasizes that Jesus' soul was human and hence "liable to be troubled and sore vexed (τεταραγμένην καὶ περίλυπον γεγενημένην μάλιστα νοούμενος)" (*Comm. Jo*. 1.28.30; GCS 4:35.26–27, ANF 10:313); clearly a reference to the agony. In *Comm. Jo*. 2.26.21, the cup prayer and Isaiah 53 form a pairing: "He took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses (Isa 53:4, Matt 8:17) of the hidden man of our heart. On account of these infirmities and sicknesses which He bore away from us, He

death was so much more beneficial, both in nature and effect, his death must by implication reflect these consequences and thus be unique. I pointed out above that the idea of "a greater martyrdom," although it served to underscore Jesus' humanity, was conducive to setting Jesus apart from ordinary men.[22] At this point in Origen's interpretation, this is about to happen.

From a rhetorical point of view, Origen argues in accordance with rhetorical practice formulated by the likes of Aristotle when he addresses how to find what is "greater" and "better" or "more advantageous." One of the principles he defines is that "things which produce a greater good are greater" (*Rhet.* 1.7.7/1363b). Applied to the issue of martyrdom, this suggests some significant difference between everyday martyrdom and the death of Jesus. Origen's understanding of the cup prayer is linked to this reasoning.

Terms and ideas at home in ancient discussions on masculinity and courage resonate throughout the treatise, which is decisive for Origen's remodeling the whole scene. In the words of Jung Sik-Cha, Origen turns a scene with potentially embarrassing content into "a demonstration of his courage and wisdom."[23] In the chapter on Celsus, we saw that Origen entered a dispute on Jesus in Gethsemane from the perspective of manly behavior. Origen's use of masculinity terms mirrored important aspects of Celsus' critique against Jesus and the Christians, but was equally indicative of how Origen himself negotiated masculinity with regard to Gethsemane. In his *Exhortation to the Martyrs*, this becomes obvious and even pointed.

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declares His soul to be sorrowful and sore troubled (Matt 26:38), and He said in Zechariah to have put on filthy garments (Zech 3:4), which, when He was about to take them off, are said to be sins" (GCS 4:83.13–21; ANF 10:338). The agony is here nothing but his suffering on behalf of human sinners. Furthermore, we see again how the view on Gethsemane is informed rather immediately by Old Testament passages.

22 We noted the same logic at work in Justin's interpretation (Chapter 10 in the present study).

23 Cha, "Confronting Death," 282.

CHAPTER 15

# Gethsemane and the Lord's Prayer

This chapter argues that the Lord's Prayer, particularly the petition "Your will be done," often came to be seen together with Jesus' dictum in the garden that his Father's will be done. The Gethsemane story provided a narrative background for this particular prayer in the Pater Noster. It is implied that the Gethsemane prayer resonates in the Lord's Prayer, and vice versa.[1] This is worth noting since this prayer, due to its origin in Christ himself, became the "Urgebet" of the Christ-followers[2] and shaped Christian identity in a special way.[3] The genre, use, and role attributed to the Lord's Prayer were such that it must have been prone to foster patterns, shape practices, and perpetuate traditions. I surmise that what we observed in Mark's Gospel is but one example of that process. Simply put, this prayer occupied a role supremely different from other texts in early Christianity. Before turning to see how Tertullian and Cyprian, the two oldest commentaries on the Lord's Prayer, addressed the prayer on God's will, we will sketch some New Testament passages that pave the way for the conclusion that Gethsemane and the Lord's Prayer were seen as adjacent texts.

## 15.1 Echoing the Lord's Prayer

It is a plausible assumption that the Lord's Prayer came to perpetuate the memories of Jesus at prayer in Gethsemane.[4] The fact that this prayer resonated as the catechetical prayer par excellence has repercussions for how the Gethsemane prayer came to be understood. The juxtaposition of these two prayers made the exemplary nature of Gethsemane evident and served to narrow the perspective on this prayer. Since the Lord's Prayer was taught to the

1 Chapters 5.5 and 6.4.

2 Karl Heinrich Ostmeyer, "Das Vaterunser: Gründe für seine Durchsetzung als 'Urgebet' der Christenheit," *NTS* 50 (2004): 320–36.

3 Geir Otto Holmås, "Prayer, 'Othering' and the Construction of Early Christian Identity in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke" in *Early Christian Prayer and Identity Formation* (ed. Reidar Hvalvik and Karl Olav Sandnes; WUNT 336; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 91–113.

4 The role of the Lord's Prayer in remembering Jesus at prayer in Gethsemane, but also in shaping this remembrance, has been overlooked in much research. I note that Clivaz, *L'Ange et la sueur de sang*, in a study so steeped in much early Christian literature, does not include it at all.

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disciples, the function of Jesus at prayer in Gethsemane is turned into what they could learn from him and from that prayer in particular. Hence, the Lord's Prayer is constantly said to be about "what the Lord taught us" (*Dom. or*. 3.29; *sicut magister Deus docuit*). By being drafted for a didactic purpose, something is gained and something lost with regard to Jesus' appearance in the garden.[5] The role of Jesus and his own destiny becomes more shadowy when coupled with the prayer for God's will to be done in the Pater Noster.

### 15.1.1 *New Testament Passages*

In the New Testament, the Pater Noster is attested in Matthew (6:7–13) and in Luke (11:1–4).[6] To be sure, the petition about "Your will be done" is missing in the older manuscripts of Luke's Gospel,[7] but this is not an exercise in finding the initial text. It is about finding the text most commonly used and therefore setting parameters for practices of interpretation. In that regard, the relevant prayer is attested to in Codex Sinaiticus prima manus (with some minor changes), in Codex Alexandrinus, Ephraemi, and Bezae including some other majuscules. It also finds support in most translations and the Majority Text. These readings most likely represent a harmonization with Matthew, but precisely in so doing they affirm that this prayer was formative and contributed to shaping traditions. A process towards conformity and unity clearly comes into view here.

Paul was likely familiar with the Lord's Prayer (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15). In both passages, the status of being "sons" finds its true expression in κρᾶζον/κράζομεν αβ βα ὁ πατήρ, echoing the address found in the Lukan version of the Lord's prayer in particular (cf. Mark 14:36). Is this an abbreviation for the Lord's Prayer? Hans Dieter Betz says that the doubling of the invocation (Abba Father) in

5 We have seen that this catechetical reading of Gethsemane finds an analogy in the *chreia* patterns discernible in Mark's story of this incident.

6 Many interpreters point out that John's Gospel shows familiarity with the Lord's Prayer. John 14:13–14 (cf. 15:7; 16:23, 26) sounds like the Fourth Gospel's idiosyncratic rendering of the traditional prayer found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 7:7–11), which in Luke 11 is seen as part of Jesus' instruction on prayer, which includes the Lord's Prayer. More particularly, the prayer in John 17 includes motifs that evoke the Lord's Prayer; see Wm. O. Walker Jr., "The Lord's Prayer in Matthew and John," *NTS* 28 (1982): 237–56, and more recently Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to John* (BNTC, New York: Hendrickson, 2005), 432–33. Interestingly, Jesus' prayer in John 17 comes narratively where the synoptic tradition places the Gethsemane prayer; see Chapter 8.4. The evidence of *Did*. 8 is well known; the Lord's Prayer is here attested as part of a liturgical setting.

7 That is Papyrus 75, Codex Vaticanus, the Vulgate and some Syrian versions, including some other manuscripts. In his commentary on this prayer, Origen also attests to this difference.

both Aramaic and Greek is due to the bilingual character of the early Church: "There is no need to assume that Paul had in mind the 'Lord's Prayer' here."[8] If the bilingual nature of Paul's churches was a particular concern for Paul, though, one would expect to find evidence elsewhere in his letters. The only reference that may support that argument is Paul's reference to Maranatha (1 Cor 16:21); apart from that instance, the bilingual character is hardly observed. Other explanations therefore demand consideration.

The presence of the Aramaic word Abba within a Greek text is odd and is most easily explained as a reference to the Lord's Prayer.[9] I therefore hold it likely that the Lord's Prayer is included here, given in the two words "Abba Father." Franz Joseph Dölger's words from 1930 are still worth recalling: "so ist tatsächlich mit der Möglichkeit zu rechnen, dass nicht nur für die Zeit Tertullians das Vaterunser als Gebet nach der Taufe anzunehmen ist, sondern dass das 'Gebet des Herrn' sogar in paulinischer Zeit nach dem Geistesempfang von dem Täufling mit der Gemeinde gebetet wurde."[10] It is likely that the Lord's Prayer is alluded to in these Pauline passages. The verb to "cry out" or to "call out" has wide connotations, likely including some excitement.[11] Walter Grundmann has made a case that κράζω in these texts must be understood against its usage in the Septuagint in which it frequently refers to prayers: φωνῇ μου πρὸς κύριον ἐκέκραξα (Ps 3:5LXX). This usage comes to life in the traditions about the sick and needy addressing Jesus, "crying" for his help.[12]

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8 Hans D. Betz, *Galatians*: *A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia: A Critical & Historical Commentary on the Bible. Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1979), 211; similarly F.E. Vokes, "The Lord's Prayer in the First Three Centuries," *StPatr* 10 (1979): 255.

9 This was argued by Alfred Seeberg, *Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit* (Munich: Kaiser Verlag 1903), 243. His view has been adopted by many scholars, such as Willy Rordorf, "The Lord's Prayer in the Light of its Liturgical Use in the Early Church," *Studia Liturgica* 14 (1980–81): 4; James D.G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson 1993), 221–22; Jewett, *Romans*, 499. This brings to mind examples from Mark's Gospel, in which Aramaic words have been preserved, as indicative of crucial parts of the tradition (Mark 5:41; 7:34; 14:36).

10 Franz J. Dölger, "Das erste Gebet der Täuflinge in der Gemeinschaft der Brüder: Ein Beitrag zu Tertullian *De baptismo* 20," in idem., *Antike und Christentum: Kultur und religionsgeschichtlichen Studium 2* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag 1974), 152–53.

11 BAGD s.v.

12 Further references in Walter Grundmann, "κράζω," *TDNT* 3:898–903. I hold this to be an observation more significant than referring to ecstatic acclamations here, *pace* Jewett, *Romans*, 499.

In his study *Constructing Jesus* (2010), Dale C. Allison, Jr. argues that the cry mentioned in Galatians and Roman echoes the story of Jesus in Gethsemane.[13] The verb κράζω is surely absent from gospel traditions about this event. According to James D.G. Dunn, the verb implies "an intensity of feeling or fervor of expression"[14] well suited for what the synoptic versions say about the incident. We have seen that Justin (*Dial.* 99.2) uses this verb in the Gethsemane context.[15] Allison's main argument is Heb 5:7, which notes that Jesus prayed with "loud cries," employing the cognate noun κραυγή. Allison's arguments are similar to the views of David Wenham, who considers it "at least a reasonable possibility" that Paul was familiar with the Gethsemane tradition and influenced by it.[16]

Making Gethsemane a subtext of Gal 4 and Rom 8 also finds some support in 2 Cor 12:7–9, according to which Paul prayed three times for the removal of his "thorn in the flesh."[17] In both instances the situation is distress, likely accompanied by physical pain that results in a prayer. The prayers are given three times (Mark and Matthew). Weakness and flesh, but also finding strength, play crucial roles in both passages. Jesus and Paul likewise face the reality that God's will differed from theirs. Paul's summary of his submitting to God's will ("My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness")[18] aptly summarizes also how Jesus' prayer was interpreted at times. The similarities between the two passages are worth noting.

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13 Allison, Jr., *Constructing Jesus*, 415–20.

14 James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38A; Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 461. Dunn also mentions Gethsemane in passing.

15 Chapter 10.3 of the present study.

16 David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity*? (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 274–80. Wenham mentions the flesh-spirit contrast, the metaphor of sleeping and keeping awake, the Abba cry, 2 Cor 12:7–9, and Rom 7:14–25. As for this last item, it is more suggestive than the similarities that may be elicited from 2 Corinthians 12. The passage in Romans 7 has no observable links to the Gethsemane traditions except the clash of wills, which is at the center of both passages. With regard to Tertullian (see below), Romans 7 is evocative because that text may be taken to oppose his principle that God's will cannot be resisted. Romans 7 leaves room for Gethsemane-like experiences, be they included here or not, about which Tertullian, judged by his interpretation of the Lord's Prayer, remains more reluctant.

17 Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 415 n. 102 give numerous examples of scholars who from Hugo Grotius on have seen a connection between that passage and Gethsemane. This chain of observations and the unique role played by the Lord's Prayer generally make it worth considering.

18 Weakness is found in both passages, but works rather differently. The weakness Paul speaks of is not what Jesus warns against.

If 2 Cor 12:7–9 really hints at Gethsemane, this is probably the first witness to someone reflecting upon the fact that the cup prayer did not find endorsement with or from God. Furthermore, the cup prayer is seen as a prayer about Jesus' concern for himself, not merely as a didactic prayer (see below). Paul likewise prayed because he was concerned about things that involved him personally. This introduction serves to demonstrate that there is a basis for assuming that the Lord's Prayer was adjacent to the Gethsemane prayer, keeping it both remembered and relevant. This also implies that some particular parameters were affirmed while others were downplayed. Most importantly, the kinship between the two texts turned Gethsemane into an instruction on prayer. With this in mind, we now address the two oldest commentaries on the Lord's Prayer, both written in Latin: Tertullian's *De Oratione* (On Prayer) and Cyprian's treatise *De Dominica Oratione*.[19]

### 15.1.2 *Tertullian: God's Will Not to be Resisted*

In his treatise On Prayer (*De Oratione*), written around 200 CE, Tertullian comments upon the Lord's Prayer as the "new prayer" for disciples of Jesus Christ (*Or*. 1.1–6). This prayer, "restricted in words, comprehensive in meaning," epitomizes the whole Gospel (*in oratione breviarium totius Evangelii comprehendatur*).[20] In this prayer, Christ "shows what children anticipate from a father" (*Or*. 6.3), which is also why calling God "Father" is so substantial to understanding this prayer.[21] The Lord's Prayer is presented as conforming to "the imagined ceremony in which the tradition of the LP was passed on to the catechumens,"[22] and is to be read against the backdrop of *Bapt*. 21.5, which refers to the first prayer the newly baptized catechumen joined in with those already Christians, thus serving to reinforce the newly obtained status.[23]

If Gethsemane was somehow intertwined with the Lord's Prayer, it is likely that Gethsemane accompanied the instructions given to the catechumens

19 Origen's treatise *On Prayer* does not provide much relevant material here, but touches upon the issue in *Or*. 16 and 26 (see below).

20 For the Latin text see Tertullian, *De Baptismo, De Oratione: Von der Taufe, vom Gebet. Lateinisch Deutsch* (ed. and tr. Dietrich Schleyer. Fontes Christiani; Turnhout: Brepols, 2006); for the English translation, see Tertullian, Cyprian & Origen, *On the Lord's Prayer* (tr. Alistair Stewart-Sykes. Popular Patristics Series; Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004).

21 Sandnes, " 'The First Prayer,' " 214–15, 222–23.

22 Michael Joseph Brown, *The Lord's Prayer Through North African Eyes: A Window into Early Christianity* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 226.

23 Sandnes, " 'The First Prayer,' " 210–13, 216–19 with references.

on how to pray while preparing for baptism.[24] The Gethsemane scene and Jesus' dictum to the sleepy disciples on praying and staying awake come into play in Tertullian's comments on the prayer "do not lead us into temptation" (*Or.* 8.4–6). Furthermore, chapter 4 is devoted to the prayer "Your will be done" and, as pointed out by Michael Joseph Brown, "the Gethsemane episode governs Tertullian's hearing and application of this text."[25]

Jesus' prayer in the garden is cited in *Or.* 4.5:

> The Lord likewise, when he desired to demonstrate (*demonstrare*) in his own flesh the weakness of the flesh (*infirmitatem carnis*) through the suffering of the passion, said: 'Father, take away this cup (*transfer poculum istud*)." And, recollecting himself (*recordatus*): "Nonetheless, let not my will but yours be done." He was himself the will and the power of the Father, and yet, in order to show the endurance (*ad demonstrationem sufferentiae*) that is due, he abandoned himself to the Father's will.

### 15.1.3 *Demonstration and Instruction*

The first point to note is that the Gethsemane scene with the prayer is an act of demonstration. Construing Gethsemane in that way makes it conducive to baptismal instruction, probably as a narrative illustration. Jesus instructs his disciples, be they present or future, and offers them an example to be followed (*ad exemplaria* 4.3), an example about endurance and patience until death (*sustineamus ad mortem usque* 4.3). In saying so, Tertullian assumes familiarity with the narrative backdrop of the passion on the part of his readers. It is extremely unlikely that Gethsemane is not part of Tertullian's context. In *Or.* 8.4–6 on temptation, Tertullian construes the Gethsemane scene as a temptation by the devil, an incident that he again sees as a demonstration or pedagogical scene.

The Gethsemane scene was primarily an opportunity for teaching a lesson about discipleship, which is important for Tertullian's interpretation of

24 John Chrysostom's instruction to baptismal candidates assumes familiarity with the cup prayer (*Baptismal Catecheses* 2.4).

25 Brown, *The Lord's Prayer*, 247. Gregory Ross Doyle, "The Concept and Practice of Prayer in Tertullian's De Oratione and Origen's Peri Euches" (M.A. Thesis, Acadia University, 2000; http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/ftp03/MQ51994.pdf) does not mention Gethsemane in his comments on the prayer of God's will, which is a limitation. As for why Tertullian comments upon this prayer before the kingdom prayer, this may be due to the fact that he considers the two closely connected; see Tertullian, *De Baptismo, De Oratione: Von der Taufe, vom Gebet. Lateinisch Deutsch* (ed. and tr. Dietrich Schleyer), 226 n. 110.

Gethsemane. Jesus acted and talked in Gethsemane in ways that were helpful in instructing disciples, or at least with a view to them. The prayer is an example, a piece of teaching that Jesus is doing this for others. What the prayer meant to Jesus himself fades into the background. Tertullian's interpretation brings to mind the Johannine Christ who makes his prayer to his Father not for himself, who does not need it, but so that others may see and learn from him (John 12:30). The point here is not altruism but instruction. Accordingly, the prayer is turned into a scene evincing what the disciples may learn, rather than what it implied for Jesus himself. During his agony in the garden, Jesus is primarily a teacher to others, not anxious about his own destiny. The closest that Tertullian comes to viewing the prayer as concerned about Jesus himself is in *Or.* 4.2, where he again echoes this scene in an admonition to disciples. It is about seeking assistance and the power to bring God's will to pass.

### 15.1.4 *Weakness in the Flesh*

It follows from this that the prayer is about Jesus' weakness in the flesh. His humanity is on display for the purpose of instructing his disciples, who are equally weak. At this point a logical lacuna opens up in Tertullian's thoughts. His emphasis on the weakness of Jesus due to his humanity is primarily a pedagogical tool, since he was himself the will and the power of the Father, as the citation above summarizes the Gethsemane prayer. That statement is also made in *Or.* 4.3, where Tertullian adds scriptural proof by referring to the Johannine idea of Jesus doing not his own will, but rather that of the Father who sent him (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). This is a reference to his ministry in general, but is now brought to bear on the Gethsemane scene: "And that same will of God is that which the Lord revealed to us in his proclamation and in his labors and in his suffering (*predicando, operando, sustinendo*)." The latter term most likely reflects Gethsemane; partly because the verb includes an aspect of endurance and partly because the discussion is about Jesus' praying that God's will be done. In reading that part of the Gethsemane prayer in the light of the united wills of Father and Son in John's Gospel, it merges with the Synoptic Gospels in this presentation, and this gospel harmony denies that the Son has any possibility of having a will that runs contrary to that of his Father.

The *voluntas Dei* cannot in any way be resisted; it is only a matter of conforming to it, as the opening line of chapter 4 states: "We are asking that his will be done in all people and not, because somebody is resisting the will of God (*non quod aliquis obsistat, quominus voluntas Dei fiat*), out of a need to pray that he be successful in implementing it." Thus Tertullian does not envisage a real conflict in Jesus; there is no clash of wills here. Jesus apparently remains unaffected by the infirmity of his flesh. As pointed out by Michael Joseph

Brown, it is only a matter of being in harmony with the will of God,[26] and this applies to Jesus in Gethsemane as well. No crisis, no doubt, no real struggle, no opposition to the divine will, can be seen here.

### 15.1.5 *Recordatus*

The citation given above is revealing as to how Tertullian looks upon the two parts of the Gethsemane prayer, the cup prayer and the will of God to be done. In *Or*. 4.5, the two are linked by the participle *recordatus*. He links them by squeezing this word between them, which supplies his own comment. This verb implies an act of thinking or reflection on the part of Jesus.[27] After having given his thoughts to the matter, so Tertullian implies, Jesus added a second prayer to the cup prayer. This means that the first prayer about the removal of the cup is considered immediate and spontaneous, not really mature and permanent. Since it was a result of immediacy rather than proper thinking, it follows, of course, that it was soon subordinated. Tertullian envisages Jesus as having examined his case more closely, with the result being the prayer that God's will be done. It is only when taken together with the second prayer on God's will that a thoughtful prayer that accords with faith comes into view. It is therefore misleading to speak of two prayers; together the two form one single Christian prayer. The cup prayer actually becomes a backdrop for the real prayer about God's will.

## 15.2 *De Fuga in Persecutione*: A Pastoral Challenge

Tertullian's use of the Gethsemane prayer in *De Fuga in Persecutione* not only confirms that the interpretation found in *On Prayer* is not an outlier, but also brings some other aspects into the picture. In a discussion addressing flight from persecution, the Gethsemane episode comes into play (*Fug*. 6–8).[28] The situation that led to this issue is stated clearly in chapter 1.3–4: "As persecutions in increasing numbers threaten us, so the more are we called on to give earnest thought to the question of how faith ought to receive them…" (ANF 4:116). Faced with this challenge, debates arose among believers, and different solutions were viable. Biblical texts were drawn upon as arguments in

26 Brown, *The Lord's Prayer*, 247.

27 OLD s.v.

28 For the Latin text, see CCSL 2; for the English translation, see ANF 4:119–21.

this discussion; this whole effort is to be read against that backdrop, as implied by *Fug*. 6.1.

Jesus in Gethsemane is presented in analogy with other biblical examples, primarily the life of Paul the Apostle. Clearly some Christians took a more complex attitude to the issue of persecution. They called upon texts about the apostles, who were urged by the Lord in such situations to "flee" from city to city (Matt 10:23), and Paul, who escaped from the plot against him by being let down in a basket through the city wall of Damascus (Acts 9:25; 2 Cor 11:32–33).[29] Such examples paved the way for analogous thinking in their present situations.

As for the first example, Tertullian says that the command to flee the city was contingent and meant only for the apostles, for a certain time and under particular circumstances (*cum et personas … et tempora et causas, Fug*. 6.1).[30] The emphasis is on the example of Paul, which also provides the foundation on which Tertullian addresses Gethsemane. Paul was commanded to flee Damascus; but this command was given *ad hoc tempus*, only for a specific time (6.6).[31] Principles of lasting value cannot be deduced from that, says Tertullian. This finds confirmation in Acts 21:10–14, where Agabus prophecies that Paul will face imprisonment in Rome. The believers present cried, to which Paul said: "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart (*quid facitis lacrimantes et conturbantes cor meum*)?" (*Fug*. 6.6).[32] He refused to flee, and the believers therefore prayed in accordance with the Lord's Prayer: *Fiat voluntas domini* ("Let the will of the Lord be done," *Fug*. 6.6).[33] This demonstrates that the commands to flee were not universal, but special in the truest sense of the word or due to strategies for outreach; hence they were all *temporale* (6.7).[34]

There is no permanent command (*perpetuo fugae praecepto*) to flee, says Tertullian in *Fug*. 7.1,[35] thus preparing the ground for a principle also at work in his *On Prayer*, that God's will is not to be challenged or opposed: *ne voluntatem suam alia voluntate praevaricare videretur* (7.1).[36] To imagine that

29 The examples illustrate nicely the use of individual and narrative examples taken from Scripture in early Christian instruction.

30 CCSL 2:1142.5–6.

31 CCSL 2:1143.48.

32 CCSL 2:1143.52–54.

33 CCSL 2:1144.56.

34 CCSL 2:1144.60.

35 CCSL 2:1144.1–2.

36 CCSL 2:1144.4–5.

the wills of Father and Son are in conflict in Gethsemane is, in principle, impossible. Chapter 8 brings the Gethsemane scene to bear upon the discussion, as one among other examples[37] that Jesus fled hostility and violence (*Fug*. 8.1). We are reminded that the prayer in Gethsemane was used as an argument to those reluctant to embrace the dominant portraiture offered by *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*. According to Tertullian, this biblical example is to be viewed with the same logic (*eadem ratione*, 8.1)[38] as the example of Paul; it was with the aim of fulfilling his ministry and teaching that Jesus at times fled his enemies. When the time was ripe, he denied both the assistance of angels and Peter's sword and faced death willingly.

Tertullian cites Jesus' words about "his soul being troubled even unto death," and introduces it with *professus* (participle from *profiteor*, 8.1),[39] thus implying that Jesus' fear of death must be conceded openly; "admittedly" brings out the sense most precisely. Tertullian conveys tacitly that this particular part of the prayer has become an issue in the debate on persecution and martyrdom. Some claimed that this incident supported fleeing persecutions, which for Tertullian is tantamount to a betrayal of faith.

This citation paves the way for some considerations pertaining to Christology, and Tertullian says that both substances (*substantiae*), the divine and the human, have expression in this episode: his soul was troubled and his flesh equally weak. We have seen that Origen in his refutation of Celsus said that Jesus' soul was hardly divine since it suffered from fear of death.[40] Tertullian says the opposite. Since Jesus' soul was troubled, both substances in him were truly human. Jesus in Gethsemane becomes a Christological demonstration of this fact: "… show you that both the substances in Him were truly human (*ut tibi ostenderet primo in se utramque substantiam humanan fuisse* (*Fug*. 8.1))."[41] Jesus demonstrated fully human weakness, in body and in soul. Tertullian takes this position against some who addressed this differently (cf. Origen and Jerome): both natures were affected by Gethsemane.

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37 It is somewhat surprising that Tertullian imagines numerous attempts to escape: "He sometimes fled from violence himself" (*refugit et ipse vim interdum, Fug*. 8.1; CCSL 2:1145.1). *Interdum* means "at times" or "now and then," clearly implying several occasions; see OLD s.v. Tertullian probably has in mind Johannine examples of the elusive Jesus. If this is correct, it is worth noting that Jesus' being elusive or hiding from those who want to kill him is mentioned in a chapter in which Gethsemane figures prominently; cf. Chapter 8.5.5 of the present study.

38 CCSL 2:1145.1.

39 CCSL 2:1145.5.

40 Chapter 4.1.4 of the present study.

41 CCSL 2:1145.6–7.

### 15.2.1 *The Cup Prayer: Not Fleeing*

Towards the end of *Fug*. 8, Tertullian returns to the topic of his essay, the question of fleeing persecution, becoming pastoral and more understanding in his instruction. Jesus also (*et*) asked his Father to have the cup of suffering pass from him (8.3);[42] "so ask you the same favour (*postula et tu*, 8.3)."[43] The double appearance of *et* (also) is revealing as to the analogical situation between Jesus in Gethsemane and his anguished believers. Jesus' example in the garden encouraged similar cup prayers when they were faced with persecution, but Tertullian urges his reader to present such a prayer as a supplication or request and to add *verum non quod ego volo sed quo tu* ("but not what I will, but what Thou will"). There is a marked difference between the cup prayer and fleeing, says Tertullian. Fleeing is tantamount to taking it into one's own hands to have the cup removed. Jesus did not do so; his cup prayer was legitimate as it led him to append the prayer of God's will. Tertullian likewise urges his addressees to keep the two prayers together: to pray as in (*tantum*) Jesus' cup prayer but to add the other prayer (*subiungens et reliqua, Fug*. 8.3).[44]

*De Fuga in Persecutione* shows a significant Christological application of the Gethsemane scene by emphasizing that Christ is fully human, even in his soul, thus invoking Christological issues more widely. However, it is primarily oriented practically towards Christians concerned about their lives and how to survive persecution. Since the petition to have the cup removed is precisely a prayer, it is by definition a decision left for God to make. Fleeing is therefore tantamount to praying as Jesus did about the removal of the cup, but leaving out the prayer that God's will be done. Tertullian's advice in chapter 8 bears some similarities to Christian adaptations of *propatheia*. Finding oneself in trouble and praying for release from this is to act Christ-like, and therefore not blamable. To do so, however, without adding what the Lord's Prayer taught about God's will is selfishness seeking to please oneself: *nec quod pater vult … sed quod tu* (*Fug*. 8.3).[45] Then *propatheia* becomes *patheia* and is to be properly and seriously blamed.

42 CCSL 2:1145.18.

43 CCSL 2:1145.19.

44 CCSL 2:1145.19–20.

45 CCSL 2:1145.22–23.

## 15.3 Cyprian: God's Will Not to be Altered

Cyprian wrote his Treatise IV on the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of the Decian persecution (ca. 252 CE). The first eleven chapters are devoted to prayer in general and addressing God as Father in particular. From chapter 12 on, Cyprian treats the petitions of the Lord's Prayer one by one and in chapters 14–16 he addresses "let your will be done in heaven and on earth." At the beginning of his argument, Cyprian makes an assertion that is highly influential on how the Gethsemane scene will be presented. He says that this prayer from the Pater Noster is not a prayer to make God do or change his will, "but that *we* should be able to do what God wishes" (*Dom. or*. 14.245–46, my emphasis).[46] God's will is constant and not to be altered; hence, this prayer is really not about him but about how "we" can conform and adjust to his will. Cyprian does not connect this assertion directly to the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane, but by consequence his logic emphasizes the second prayer and leaves the cup prayer more or less void, since that could be seen as a prayer aimed at making God change his will. This assertion is affirmed with a rhetorical question: "For who stands in the way of God to prevent him performing his will?" (*Dom. or*. 14.246–47).

### 15.3.1 *Cup Prayer: Context Rather Than Prayer*

The problem that this prayer from the Pater Noster addresses is that human beings, due to their weakness and the opposition of the devil, are far from submitting themselves completely to God. Against that backdrop, this prayer is about finding God's assistance and help to accept and embrace His will. Cyprian pictures Jesus in Gethsemane similarly: "And so, even the Lord (*denique et Dominus*), showing the human weakness which he bore (*infirmitatem hominis quem portabat ostendens*), says: 'Father, it if might be possible, let this cup pass away from me' " (*Dom. or*. 14.252–54). Through his cup prayer Jesus displayed his human weakness in a way that united him with human beings generally. Jesus' first prayer sketches the situation from which human beings pray as taught in the Lord's Prayer ("your will be done"), which is equivalent to his second prayer in the garden. The cup prayer is therefore only a prelude that provides the circumstances for the second prayer. The cup prayer simply makes the other part of the prayer stand out as earnest.

Both parts of the Gethsemane prayer figure prominently in Cyprian's treatise, and the relationship between them is clearly stated. While the first is a

46 Translation from *Tertullian, Cyprian & Origen On the Lord's Prayer* (tr. Stewart-Sykes); Latin text in CCSL 3A.

demonstration of the weakness Jesus shared with human beings generally, the second prayer is an example to the disciples on how they should pray: *exemplum discipulis suis tribuens* (14.254–55). Together the two prayers form a lesson on human weakness and how to pray given that reality. Due to the literary context and the intent of this treatise, the weight is very much on the second prayer. The cup prayer is not only subordinated; if isolated, it stops being a true prayer and instead only provides the circumstances for the second prayer of Jesus that echoes the Lord's Prayer.

Like Tertullian, Cyprian quotes the Johannine concept of the obedient (*obaudiuit*) son who says: "I have not come down from heaven to do my own will but the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38). From that assertion Cyprian quotes 1 John 2:15 at length. That passage is a warning against love for the world, since "everything in the world is lust of the flesh (*concupiscentia carnis*), which is not from the Father but from worldly desire" (*concupiscentia mundi, Dom. or*. 14.260–69). It seems not to have crossed the African theologian's mind that this is precisely how the cup prayer was often understood if judged by ideals of how men of wisdom faced death. Cyprian evinces no concern about this, since the cup prayer for him hardly is a real prayer, only a reference to the situation in which human beings are urged to pray as Jesus taught his disciples in the prototypical prayer, to let God's will be done.

It is against this background that Cyprian in *Dom. or*. 15.270 summarizes his instruction by saying that the will of God is "what Christ both did and taught (*et fecit et docuit*)." What follows makes clear that this applies to his life and ministry in general, but also illustrates nicely how Cyprian conceived of the relationship between the two prayers in Gethsemane. It is only when they form a pairing of circumstance and prayer that they are truly a lesson in Christian prayer. What Jesus taught is summarized throughout this chapter. I select formulations relevant for Gethsemane: constancy in faith (*stabilitas in fide*, 15.271), restraint in self-discipline (*in moribus disciplina*, 15.272–73), standing by the cross with courage and faith (*cruci eius fortiter ac fidenter adsistere*, 15.277–78), and exhibiting constancy (*exhibere in sermone constantiam*, 15.279). Admittedly, this portrayal owes more to the crucifixion scene than to the Gethsemane tradition (at least in its synoptic versions), and is formulated in accordance with ideals of manly courage. It is important to note that Gethsemane is seen from that angle and that the emphasis on the second prayer paved the way for this to happen. In this way Jesus is seen as fulfilling the will of his Father (*uoluntatem patris implore*) in an exemplary manner (*Dom. or*. 15.281–82).

## 15.4 Summary

To both Tertullian and Cyprian, the Lord's Prayer epitomized the entire gospel message. Gethsemane traditions are, therefore, naturally included in their arguments. They comment on the community text par excellence, so there is good reason to assume that what they render goes beyond their own private views. Their comments reflect wider streams of interpretations perpetuated through the prayer taught by Jesus himself. The Gethsemane scene provided a narrative example against which the prayer that "God's will be done" made sense. Through the Lord's Prayer and its unique position, Gethsemane was handed down on a continuing basis, but also significantly reshaped. This scene from Jesus' life came to be seen primarily as a piece of instruction. Jesus' weakness was on display as a pedagogical tool for the disciples. Accordingly, Gethsemane conveys more about discipleship than about Jesus himself. From this it follows that the cup prayer is subordinated to the prayer about God's will. To Tertullian, the cup prayer is only a legitimate prayer when combined with the second prayer. To Cyprian, the cup prayer represents primarily a circumstance rather than a real prayer, providing an example of how Jesus submitted to God's will in a particular situation of anxiety; the cup prayer is the context for the second prayer. Since God's will is to be neither resisted nor altered, there is hardly any place left for cup prayers, particularly if not joined to "God's will be done."

The Gethsemane scene is in these two treatises deeply embedded in prayer theology; it is actually a text about prayer. We may also say that prayer theology provides parameters for interpreting this scene from Jesus' life. According to Tertullian, it was the principle that God's will should not to be resisted. According to Cyprian, it was the principle that God's will was not to be altered. Any prayer about God's will, therefore, concerns our ability to embrace that will rather than any suggestion that God might alter it. Jesus' passionate prayer about himself, asking God for a way out of the prospect of dying, does not fit easily into a prayer theology proceeding from these principles.

Origen does not address Gethsemane in his treatise *On Prayer*, but comments upon "God's will be done" in chapter 26. He proceeds from a principle applicable to his prayer theology, that Christians ought to accept the paternal will by following Christ, who accomplished the will of his Father completely (*Or*. 26.3). He came to do the will of his Father, a typical Johannine way to put it. However, Origen emphasizes in *Or*. 26.6 that one should not pray for "mundane or minor matters" but rather for heavenly as opposed to material things. Accordingly, the prayer about bread is not about actual bread but "supersubstantial bread" (*Or*. 27.1–17). The distinctions urged by Origen here bring to mind Epictetus' distinction between things that matter and things

that do not matter.[47] For Origen, Jesus' submission to the Father's will represents a model whereby flesh and fleshly needs are gradually surrendered to God. The Pauline idea of spirit working against flesh provides a framework for understanding the Gethsemane scene. The "victory of the spirit over the resistant flesh in Jesus' agony makes of his prayer a paradigm to be followed by Christians ..."[48] Cup prayers, petitionary in their nature, can hardly thrive within such theology. From this it follows that matters pertaining to oneself become questionable from a theological point of view. This is really *apatheia*, the philosophical ideal of equanimity, as becomes apparent in Clement of Alexandria's prayer theology.

### 15.4.1 *Prayer and Apatheia: Clement of Alexandria,* Stromateis *7*

In order to contextualize the prayer theology under discussion, it is worth sketching Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis* 7 on prayer.[49] His prayer theology cannot simply be identified with those of Tertullian and Cyprian, but he formulates parameters that are also at work in their comments on the Lord's Prayer, though more vividly in Origen's treatise on prayer. Furthermore, Clement's treatise on prayer illuminates why Christians influenced by Greek philosophy were troubled by the Gethsemane prayers, particularly the cup prayer. The issue of passions and prayer that he puts on the agenda makes his treatise on prayer highly relevant for the perception of Jesus' passionate prayer in Gethsemane. Clement's treatise on prayer in *Stromateis* 7 does not address Gethsemane, but the Lord's Prayer is diffused throughout his treatise. His presentation is imbued with Greek philosophy and ideals commonly held in that context. Clement proceeds from a nature of God that is rational, altruistic, and marked by *apatheia*: God is passionless.

### 15.4.2 *Praying in Conformity With God's Nature*

Prayers offered should be in conformity with God's nature, so passionless prayer is recommended. God is not in any way affected by prayers, although

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47 See Chapter 2.5.1 of the present study.

48 Lorenzo Perrone, "Prayer in Origen's *Contra Celsum*: The Knowledge of God and the Truth of Christianity," *VC* 55 (2001): 8.

49 Brown, *The Lord's Prayer*, 132–59. Clement's treatise is often seen as the oldest Christian theological statement on this subject; see Henny Fiskå Hägg, "Seeking the Face of God: Prayer and Knowledge in Clement of Alexandria" in *The Seventh Book of the Stromateis: Proceedings of the Coloquium on Clement of Alexandria (Olomouc, October 21–23, 2010)*. (ed. Matyáš Havrda, Vít Hušek, and Jana Plátová; Supplements to VC 111; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 131.

they have a therapeutic effect on the *orant* (the pray-er) and his[50] *ethos*. Prayer becomes a tool in the work of philosophy aimed at improving the soul (ἰατρικὴ μὲν σώματος φιλοσοφία δὲ ψυχῆς βελτιωτική, *Strom.* 7.1.3.2).[51] This enrolls prayer in an educational program aimed at making progress.

The prayer of "the perfect man" or the mature Christian is in *Strom.* 7.7.38 contrasted with prayers driven by desires (ὀρέξεις and ἐπιθυμίαι, 7.7.38.4).[52] Against this "the perfect man" seeks not things that are good, but instead "to be good (εἶναι δε ἀγαθον)" (20).[53] Since God is ἀπαθής, he can never be hindered (κωλυθείη, 7.2.7.1).[54] Several lines later, Clement speaks about Jesus taking upon himself a human nature susceptible of passion, but "trained ... to the condition of impassibility (εἰς ἕξιν ἀπαθείας ἐπαίδευσεν)" (*Strom.* 7.2.7.5).[55] Jesus is then portrayed as an example to believers; together they participate in a contest, like athletes, as they grow towards the ἀπείθεια of "the perfect man" (7.2.10.1).[56]

### 15.4.3 *Becoming "the Perfect Man"*

The ideal of the perfect man (ἀνήρ τέλειος) is a favorite in this literature and is an alteration of Eph 4:13, where the author addresses progress towards manly perfection. Prayer in terms of contemplation or silent continuous prayer leads to the peak of this process, which is absolute equanimity. The idea of reaching the summit or peak (*Strom.* 7.7.46.3–9)[57] is at home in a philosophical and educational discourse wherein the climax of learning is philosophy or contemplating God.[58] For the philosophical and pedagogical motivations at work in this prayer theology, Gethsemane presents a problem.

To be without any needs is the nature of God (7.3.14.5),[59] while the "perfect man" has no needs and is pleased with things as they are. Clement's use of the

50 Since the ideal in this treatise is so markedly on the manly prayer, I retain "his," although women are not excluded from the masculine ideal at work here.

51 SC 428:44.5–6; ANF 2:523. For philosophy as healing, see also *Strom.* 7.7.48.4; SC 428:164.12–13. For prayer as essential for the progress of the believer, see Perrone, "Prayer in Origen's *Contra Celsum*," 12.

52 SC 428:138.7–20; ANF 2:533.

53 Thus also *Strom.* 7.7.38.4; SC 428:138.14–20.

54 SC 428:54.2–4; ANF 2:524–25.

55 SC 428:56.19–22; ANF 2:525.

56 SC 428:62.1–10; ANF 2:525.

57 SC 428:158.7–160.27.

58 See Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 33–36, 64–67.

59 SC 428:72.15–19; ANF 2:527.

ideal of sufficiency (αὐτάρκεια, *Strom.* 7.7.44.3–5)[60] may indicate that Phil 4:11 is important in his prayer theology, although that is not spelled out. Prayers inspired by the cup prayer hardly find any justification within this logic. The framework in which Clement addresses prayer is making progress or participating as a true athlete in the contest in the stadium to achieve victory over the passions (7.3.20.3–8),[61] certainly a manly undertaking (τῆς ἀνδρείας καρτερία, 7.3.18.1).[62]

It follows from this that the true orant does not pray for those things required for and by life, but is instead concerned about progress in developing a knowledge of God. Requests for personal and material things are inappropriate and arise from ignorance or being subjected to passions:

> Such is our Gnostic, faithful, persuaded that the affairs of the universe are managed in the best way. Particularly, he is well pleased with all that happens. In accordance with reason, then, he asks for none of those things in life required for necessary use; being persuaded that God, who knows all things, supplies the good with whatever is for their benefit, even though they do not ask. (*Strom.* 7.7.45.4–46.1)[63]

The prayer that God's will be done is therefore simply a matter of submitting to God's providence.[64] Clement judges passionate prayers to be problematic in the light of his philosophically-inspired prayer theology. The unlearned multitude makes their desires the objects of its prayers: "Prayer, then, and desire, follow in the order, with the view of possessing the blessings (τὰ ἀγαθὰ) and advantages offered (τὰ παρακείμενα ὠφελήματα)" (*Strom.* 7.7.38.3).[65] Examples may be diseases, accidents, or being faced with death, but the true orant addresses these things as "medicine of salvation, benefiting by discipline…" (*Strom.* 7.11.61.5; SC 428:196.19–198.25; ANF 2.540). As pointed out by Michael J. Brown, the problem with popular prayer for Clement is egoism: "A large part of *Stromata* 7 is concerned with egoism in prayer."[66] Jesus at prayer in Gethsemane is in need of significant adjustment to avoid being seen as an act of egoism.

60 SC 428:152.8–154.19 cf. 7.7.47.4–5; SC 428:162.10–17.
61 SC 428:86.6–88.26; ANF 2:528.
62 SC 428.80.27; ANF 2:527–28.
63 SC 428:158.19–4.
64 Brown, *The Lord's Prayer*, 156–57.
65 SC 428:138.13–15; ANF 2:533.
66 Brown, *The Lord's Prayer*, 142–43.

### 15.4.4 *Contemplation, Not Requests*

Legitimate prayers are only for the soul, not for material things. The ideal prayer is thus continuous contemplation rather than a voicing of requests; silent prayer is the form of prayer which corresponds to the nature of God.[67] It is through the thoughts of the prayer that God receives prayers of the orant. In the dismissal of actual speech we can also see how the manly ideal of facing troubles silently reappears.[68] It is evident that this prayer theology must resist any reading of the Gethsemane scene that involves Jesus' being concerned with his own death, let alone frightened at the prospect. The cup prayer, again if seen in combination with the reference to the superiority of God's will, is most likely to be judged as passion, ignorance, and egoism. The reason that it never appears in Clement's treatise is his clear and emphatic altruistic interpretation of Jesus' death (Strom 7.2.8.1; SC 428:56.4; ANF 2:525). For obvious reasons, it does not make sense to depict Jesus' prayer as being in any way egoistic. Nevertheless, Clement's negligence of that part of Jesus' prayer has consequences for how he envisages Christian prayer generally.

In the publication drawn from a recent colloquium on *The Seventh Book of the Stromateis*, two contributions address the role of prayer. Both Henny Fiskå Hägg and Lorenzo Perrone defend in different ways Clement's prayer theology. According to Fiskå: "Rarity or not, there can be no doubt that Clement found in the New Testament many texts that inspired, and helped formulate his own ideas of prayer, including that of personal 'continuous prayer'."[69] According to Perrone, Clement must be read against the backdrop of the apologetic situation in which he addresses prayer: "Dennoch, wäre es ganz und gar verfehlt, das Denken von Clemens als philosophisch 'kontaminiert' anzusehen."[70] To be sure, *Stromateis* 7 has the Greeks as its addressees, as stated explicitly in 7.1.1.[71]

Approaching Clement's concept of prayer from the perspective of the cup prayer or related petitionary prayers shifts the emphasis from what both Fiskå and Perrone report. The fact the Clement's prayer theology also relies heavily

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67 Brown, *The Lord's Prayer*, 149.

68 Chapter 4.2 of the present study.

69 Hägg, "Prayer and Knowledge," 136. This is stated against Anthony Meredith who claims that "this rarified conception of prayer has little obvious similarity with the New Testament."

70 Lorenzo Perrone, "Clemens von Alexandrien und Origenes zum Gebet: Versuch eines Paradigmenvergleichnis anhand ihrer Schriftstellen," in *The Seventh Book of the Stromateis: Proceedings of the Colloquium on Clement of Alexandria (Olomouc, October 21–23, 2010)*. (ed. Matyáš Havrda, Vít Hušek, and Jana Plátová. Supplements to VC 111. Leiden: Brill, 2012), 161.

71 SC 428:39.1.

on New Testament passages and the apologetic purpose of his text cannot do away with the fact that petitionary prayers like the cup prayer can hardly be accommodated within this theology. In this way Clement affirms that many early Christians from Matthew on found it necessary to negotiate Mark's solution that the emotional and petitionary nature of the cup prayer was analogous to the righteous sufferers. With small but important steps, Matthew initiated a process that came to question this aspect of the Gethsemane prayer, with Clement representing its culmination, even if he does not address that prayer directly.

CHAPTER 16

# "Hippolytus": Gethsemane and Doctrinal Proof

The texts to be addressed here are all attributed to Hippolytus, the third century Roman presbyter. However, present-day Hippolytus-scholars differ markedly in what has come to be known as the Hippolytus question, namely whether the writings attributed to him come from different hands or from a redaction within a "school."[1] For our purpose it suffices to refer to "Hippolytus," recognizing the complexity of the author question, but also that the writings probably belong within a fellowship or community; i.e. coming out of the same "school."[2]

"Hippolytus" composed a tractate *Contra Noetum*[3] that was directed against Noetus and his followers, who taught so-called patripassianism, a doctrine claimed that God was incarnate, suffered, and died. Whatever happened to the Son also happened to the Father. By implication this view opposes divine *apatheia* and questions Trinitarian theology. Chapter 17 of *Contra Noetum* picks up on this, saying that Christ became incarnate as the Word of God, taking upon himself the flesh of Mary. He became all that human beings are, though with the exception of sin. Christ was manifested as God in a human body (ἐν σώματι ἐφανερώθη), "not in mere appearance or by a conversion" (οὐ γὰρ κατὰ φαντασίαν ἢ τροπὴν, PG 10.828a). The Greek noun (τροπή) simply means "turning" or "change," but came to be important in Christological discussions.[4] Here it works to uphold the distinction between Father and Son. "Hippolytus" separates himself both from those who take a docetic view on incarnation and from those who hold to patripassianism.

That Christ did not refuse the conditions of men has been demonstrated (ἐνδεικνύμενος), says "Hippolytus" (*Noet*. 18).[5] This terminology is informative with regard to the setting "Hippolytus" imagines, since it evokes the rhetorical

1 For a comprehensive discussion, see Allen Brent, *Hipolytus and the Third Century: Communities in Tension Before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop* (Supplements VC 31; Leiden: Brill, 1995).

2 See Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Roman and North African Christianity," in *The Routledge Companion of Early Christian Thought* (ed. D. Jeffrey Bingham, London: Routledge, 2010), 158–60.

3 PG 10.803–30; ANF 5:223–31; see also Hippolytus of Rome: Contra Noetum (ed and tr. Robert Butterworth; London: Tonbridge Printers, 1977).

4 Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, s.v.

5 PG 10.828b.

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context that we have already seen at work in Origen's *Contra Celsum*.[6] The verb refers to "giving proof" and indicates either a judicial or rhetorical context, real or imagined.[7] The proofs provided by God are as follows:

> He hungers (πεινᾷ) and toils (κοπιᾷ) and thirsts in weariness (διψᾷ), and flees in fear (δειλιῶν φεύγει), and prays in trouble (λυπεῖται). And He who as God has a sleepless nature slumbers on a pillow. And He who for this end came into the world, begs off from the cup of suffering (ποτηρίου πάθος παραιτεῖται). And in an agony He sweats blood (ἀγωνιῶν ἱδροῖ),[8] and is strengthened by an angel, who Himself strengthens those who believe in Him, and taught men to despise death by His work. (PG 10.828b; ANF 5:231)

The chapter goes on, listing as if it were a creed events from Jesus' life that prove his humanity. Some of the descriptions are specific in referring to identifiable occasions recounted in the gospels, such as his thirst (John 4:7; 19:28). It is worth noting the role attributed to the agony and cup prayer in this context. Within this quotation, this incident emerges several times. Undoubtedly, the cup, the agony and the angel, and his praying while in λύπη bring to mind that particular event. We also find the somewhat enigmatic φεύγει, which has no clear reference in Jesus' life in the gospels. However, two observations favor a Gethsemane reference here. First, as seen in many places, the participle δειλιῶν and cognates often resonate in discussions on courage versus cowardice. It is therefore likely that this particular part of the creed picks up on contemporary criticism voiced against Jesus in Gethsemane. "Hippolytus" inverts it, though, seeing it as a proof of humanity. He takes advantage of what critics held against Jesus.

Furthermore, the present tense (φεύγει) may be taken as an example of a so-called *de conatu*,[9] implying that Jesus attempted to flee, which could again reflect the complaints often raised against his Gethsemane performance. The tensions pointed out by critics against Jesus in Gethsemane, such as his plea to get away from the very purpose of his coming into the world, are to "Hippolytus" paradoxes that capture precisely who Jesus truly is.

6 Chapter 4.1.1 in the present study.

7 The agony and the first part of the prayer at Gethsemane work analogous to rhetorical examples; see *Her*. 4.1.1–2; 4.3.5, Aristotle, *Rhet*. 1.1.11/1355a; 3.13.2/1414a.

8 The Greek text does not mention "blood:" the translator infers that from Luke here.

9 BDR §319.

## 16.1 Kenosis

Fragment 3 from the *Paschal Homily* (PG 10.864a; ANF 5.238) addresses the prayer in Gethsemane only briefly, but in a way that merits consideration. The point of departure is that Christ is "all (ὅλος) in all," (*totus in omnibus*) substantiated with reference to the portrayal of Christ in Colossians as ruler of the universe and principalities. However, Christ stripped himself of all this; this motif of kenosis, which usually is associated with Phil 2:7,[10] here finds its substantiation in Gethsemane:

> And for a short time (πρὸς ὀλίγον)[11] he cries that the cup might pass from Him (βοᾷ παρελθεῖν τὸ ποτήριον), with a view to show truly (ἵνα δείξῃ ἀληθῶς) that He was also a man. But remembering, too, the purpose for which he was sent, He fulfills the plan (οἰκονομίαν)[12] for which He was sent, and exclaims (βοᾷ), "Father, not my will,' and 'the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

It is striking that "Hippolytus" introduces the cup prayer with the verb βοάω, a term without any precedent in the gospel stories. The initial impulse might be to see the tradition of Heb 5:7 echoed, but it is not the same verb. This might be affirmed by the fact that "Hippolytus" in saying that Christ became human with the exception of sin draws on Hebrews (4:15). However, the fact that "Hippolytus" uses the same verb for both prayers indicates that it is hardly anything more than the intensity of the prayer in general that is intended. Both parts of the prayer are equally emotional.

The cup prayer is seen primarily as giving proof and so is less about Jesus; it becomes a piece of instruction aimed at others. This fully demonstrates that Jesus in Gethsemane is seen as manifesting Christian truths to posterity, or more precisely a lesson on his true nature. The Gethsemane passage is read by "Hippolytus" not as a biography but as a collection of proof-texts that serve Christian dogmatics. Nonetheless, the first petition is still there, indicating "a temporary disagreement between God's will and Jesus' will at the moment of the first petition."[13] "Hippolytus" is explicit on a clash of wills here, but his overall perspective turns this scene into a lesson on Christology.

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10 In *Contra Beronem et Heliconem* 2 (PG 10.833a, ANF 5:232), "Hippolytus" actually describes incarnation with the noun κένωσις.

11 I have here slightly altered the translation of ANF ("for a brief space").

12 Here I have also changed the translation from ANF's "dispensation (economy)."

13 Cha, "Confronting Death," 284.

The way "Hippolytus" juxtaposes the cup prayer and the "weak flesh" indicates that the petition exemplifies something to be rectified, while the willing spirit manifests itself in the second prayer on submitting to God's will. It must be emphasized, though, that for "Hippolytus" there is nothing to criticize in the first petition. By combining the two petitions to the respective parts of the dictum on flesh versus spirit, though, he runs into the same problems that we saw at work in Origen.[14] In the relevant New Testament texts, the weak flesh is something Jesus urges his disciples to guard against; it is a situation to be eliminated as visualized in the sleeping disciples. In "Hippolytus" argument, however, this dictum has come to illustrate the two natures of Christ, of which neither may be removed or overcome. There is no need to fight any of them in the way that Jesus urges his disciples to stand up against their weak flesh. This illustrates how "Hippolytus" reception and use of this text imposes upon it categories that fit the text only oddly if at all. His way out of the dilemma is likely to be found in his "for a short time," which makes the first petition temporary,[15] but his argument carries with it a negative evaluation that was likely beyond his intention. Gethsemane has become a theological proof-text organized according to orthodox Christology.

14 Chapter 4.1.4 of the present study.

15 In *Contra Beronem et Heliconem* 2 (PG 10.833a; ANF 5:232), the first prayer is temporary as the incarnation is also only for a limited period, but "Hippolytus" simultaneously assumes that it is precisely in the flesh that Jesus is holy.

CHAPTER 17

# John Chrysostom: Gethsemane and Acted Proof

The passages in which John Chrysostom deals most extensively with Jesus in Gethsemane appear in his *Hom.* 83 on Matt 26:36–38[1] and his *Hom.* 67 on John 12:25–26.[2] We take the homily on Matthew as our point of departure, as it is especially relevant for our purpose. When Judas enters the scene, the homily changes and focuses on the issue of greed. However, this observation is in itself a reminder that the homilies have *practical* aims; they are about how the audience is supposed to conduct their lives. This is also Chrysostom's perspective on Jesus' prayer in the garden.

## 17.1 Engaging Competing Views

Chrysostom is clearly engaged in a discourse that features conflicting views on Jesus in Gethsemane.[3] Both homilies make that explicit. His *Homily on Matthew* brings in the sweat flowing from Jesus' face during his agony—clearly imported from the longer Lukan version—and says that the heretics might not subscribe to that. It is not evident whether Chrysostom here refers to heretics more generally or to some who make their voices heard in his vicinity. Be that as it may, when Chrysostom addresses Gethsemane, he does so with the aim of combating opposing views within the wider Christian communities. This finds affirmation in the homily on John where Chrysostom cites critical voices: "For lest they should say, that 'He being exempt from mortal pains easily (εὐκόλως) philosophizes on death, and exhorts us being himself in no danger" (ἡμῖν ἐξ ἀκινδύνου παραινεῖ).[4] We don't know the identity of "they" here, but from the citation we gather that Chrysostom intends some believers who find Jesus

1 PG 58.746–52; NPNF 10:497–501.

2 PG 59.369–74; NPNF 14:248–50. See also *Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist: Homilies 48–88* (tr. Sister Thomas Aquinas Goggin; FC 41; Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000).

3 Wendy Mayer, *The Homilies of St John Chrysostome—Provenance* (OCA 273; Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2005) has initiated a debate on the provenance of the homilies as a key issue for their interpretation. The social setting of the texts involved in the present study is not of primary interest for our study.

4 PG 59.371a; NPNF 14:249.

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inconsistent. They pointed out the inconsistency between Jesus' urging disciples to give up their lives while he was tormented by the pains of death. Hence, in *Hom.* 67 the question is about inconsistency on the part of Jesus. He asks from his followers more than he himself could stand. In order to illustrate the latter view, we may refer to the inconsistency between *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* and Jesus' cup prayer.[5] We do not know if the ancients made such a connection, but it may still serve to pinpoint a direction of their critique. From this I deduce that Chrysostom turns to this scene from Jesus' life in the context of seriously conflicting views.

*Hom.* 83 is about docetic Christology, so the mention of heretics immediately leads to the issue of Jesus' humanity. In this passage, Chrysostom brings out one of his fundamental principles in scriptural interpretation and applies it to Gethsemane. This is not surprising since the principle is in fact a deduction from incarnation. Out of divine love for humankind, God's words are communicated "clothed in the human limitations which the Word assumed in the Incarnation."[6] It is a gesture of divine considerateness; this is indeed incarnational theology. God's purpose is to communicate (*Hom.* 58 on Genesis; PG 54.109–10), "to lead humankind from material things upward to spiritual realities."[7] *Synkatabasis* is always motivated by humans' limited understandings. When Chrysostom uses this principle with respect to Gethsemane, he demonstrates how thoroughly pedagogical he considers the episode.[8] Inconsistency on the part of Jesus and Docetism are, therefore, the two main issues Chrysostom and his opponents are debating.

5 See Chapters 3.4 and 3.5; cf. *De persecutione in Fuga* which reveals that this issue was negotiated (Chapter 15.2 of the present study).

6 Quoted from Robert C. Hill, *Reading the Old Testament in Antioch* (The Bible in Ancient Christianity 5; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 36; see also pp. 35–39.

7 Hill, *Reading the Old Testament in Antioch*, 39.

8 This polemical front also emerges in his exposition of Heb 5:7–8 in *Hom.* 8 (PG 63.67a–75a). There is no doubt that Chrysostom's exposition of this passage is developed from the Gethsemane scene, as he cites the cup prayer. He considers it a demonstration of the incarnation. The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks in different terms on this issue, though. Nowhere in the gospels does it report that Jesus wept when he cried out, nor that he uttered a cry, Chrysostom says. In making this claim, the author actually brings out even more forcefully that Jesus exhibited his human weakness: "Do you see that it was a condescension (συγκατάβασις)? For he could not [merely] say that He prayed, but also 'with strong crying' " (PG 63.69a; NPNF 14:404). Thus Heb 5 is to Chrysostom an amplification of the humanity of Christ involved in the Gethsemane scene, *pace* Clivaz, *L'ange et la sueur*, 512.

## 17.2 Instructions for Acting

In both homilies, Chrysostom envisages the Gethsemane scene as an action aimed at the disciples in both the present and for posterity (see below). The practical aim of the homilies comes into view at the very outset of *Hom.* 83. The scene drawn from the life of Jesus symbolically conveys a message. Jesus performs a symbolic act ripe with meanings and lessons. Chrysostom observes that Jesus withdrew from the apostles, according to his custom. His withdrawal to pray is a lesson on how to pray (παιδεύων ἡμᾶς).[9] Chrysostom implicitly connects this to the prayer instruction in Matt 6:5–15, where Jesus urges prayer in solitude and concentration, a paradigm for private prayer free from the disturbances of everyday life.

Furthermore, Jesus acts throughout in ways conducive to instruction and teaching. Naturally, Matt 26:41 is such an example: "See, how He is again instructing them (πῶς πάλιν αὐτοὺς παιδεύει) not to be self-confident, but contrite in mind, and to be humble, and to refer all to God."[10] This is, of course, easily connected to the second prayer, where Jesus fully submits (συνᾴδει) to God's will, and accordingly, "we must always follow this, and seek after it" (PG 58.747a). The way Jesus faced his agony is also, according to *Hom.* 67.2, a lesson to Chrysostom's audience: "He taught (ἐπαίδευσε) something else. Of what kind is that? That if ever we be in agony and dread (ἐν ἀγῶνι ... καὶ δειλίᾳ), we even then start not back from that which is set before us (μηδε οὕτως ἀποπηδήσωμεν τῶν προκειμένων). ..."[11] The verb διαφεύγω and cognates hold an important place in this discussion. According to *Hom.* 83,[12] Jesus stood firm and taught (παιδεύων)[13] to follow God even when human nature suggested otherwise. This story from Jesus' life has various paraenetic functions, all drawn from the conviction that Jesus in the garden *acted* out his instructions; he set examples for disciples to imitate. Frances M. Young has demonstrated how John Chrysostom's homilies are encouraged by ancient mimesis, and therefore are paraenetic exegesis.[14] Accordingly, Jesus' own struggle fades into the background.

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9 PG 58.745a; NPNF 10:497.

10 PG 58.746a; NPNF 10:498.

11 PG 59.371a; NPNF 14:249.

12 PG 58.746a; NPNF 10:497.

13 The verb παιδεύω is frequently used in this part of the homily.

14 Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 248–57.

## 17.3 Acting Christology

Jesus acted out not only instructions to be followed but also dogmatic truths, especially as regards Christology. Gethsemane is to Chrysostom a shibboleth in Christology, revealing the distinctive marks of heresy and orthodoxy, respectively. The agony and cup prayer make for strong proofs of humanity. Jesus' agony was not fictitious but real; he acted out agony (ὑποκρίνεται τὴν ἀγωνίαν).[15] This is stated against the backdrop of the longer Lukan version. Interestingly, Chrysostom adds a short comment here: "lest any one should affirm the words to be feigned (πεπλασμένα)." Here the discourse level of this text comes into view; clearly some considered the agony to be invented.[16] According to Chrysostom, there are "a thousand signs of fear (μυρία φόβου τεκμήρια)." He simply "showed (ἔδειξε) his humanity" (746a), thus "proving the incarnation" (δείκνυσι),[17] or establishing the fact that he was indeed become man. Furthermore, Chrysostom argues according to rhetorical patterns regarding consistency between words and deeds (746a). Jesus' agony in the garden adds active proof to his words. Thus the agony proves the sincerity of the prayer to let death pass from him. Together the two form a coherent argument for humanity and incarnation. The argument of *Hom.* 83.1 is shot through with rhetorical terminology and logic. What Jesus did in Gethsemane was to make arguments.[18]

Even in *Hom. John* 67.1–2, Jesus is not exempt from agony, fear of death, and the natural inclination to cling to human life. In fact, the portrayal of Jesus follows Chrysostom's addressing believers in need of being set free from the pleasures of the present life. Sympathy with the pleasures of the present is a kind of chain from which Chrysostom urges his audience to free themselves. Christ came to us to undo these chains, teaching about fear and liberation from the power of the present life.[19] Chrysostom works with an apparent contradiction between Jesus' teachings, as given in John 12:25–26, and his agony.

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15 PG 58.746a; see also ἀγωνιῶν αὐτὸν (PG 59.371a). The verb used here may mean "to pretend" and thus bring to mind Macarius of Magnus, but that runs contrary to Chrysostom's argument. Hence, the verb here means a dramatic representation as performed by actors; see LSJ s.v.

16 One comes to think of Macarius Magnes who, due to his "strategic" solution, in fact, comes close to such a criticism. His argument centered around Jesus' pretending agony in Gethsemane; see Chapters 4.8.3–4.8.6 of the present study.

17 PG 58.747a; NPNF 10:498.

18 The Greek verbs δείκνυμι and πιστεύω together with the noun τεκμήριον and the coherence between words and deeds make that obvious.

19 PG 59.369a; NPNF 14:249.

With reference to the Synoptics, Chrysostom assumes here a conflict within Jesus. His human nature is unwilling to die, clinging to the present life. This is, of course, a repercussion of his exegesis of John 12:25–26, but here he primarily draws upon the other three gospels. It is with their help that Chrysostom works out a struggle within Jesus between his human desire to live and his commitment to his Father. This struggle proves for Chrysostom that Jesus was not exempted from human feelings. It is not blamable to be hungry or to sleep, says Chrysostom, and it is equally human to desire the present life. The words Jesus uttered in his agony are, therefore, seen as "infirmities" attributable to his human nature. Chrysostom also says here that Jesus showed his agony; the verb δείκνυμι and cognates loom large.[20]

In both homilies, the agony of Jesus belongs to the οἰκονομία; it is part only of his humanity. Hence, he also said: "Now is my soul troubled." In Chrysostom's anthropology, "soul" refers to human beings, so it is Jesus as a human who uttered this. "Now" (νῦν) may also imply limitations to Jesus' being troubled; it applied only to the moment before he thought through the implications (see below).

Chrysostom's interpretation of John 12:27–28 follows John here, but in accordance with the method of harmonizing the gospels, the synoptic and Johannine traditions are intertwined in a way that make the agony stand out as both real and burdensome to Jesus. Against that backdrop the cup prayer is understandable as a true expression of humanity, but this harmony also creates its own confusion since in John's Gospel the cup prayer is only contemplated and Jesus refrained from actually speaking it aloud.

## 17.4 The Cup Prayer: Real or Contemplated?

In his *Homily on Matthew*, Chrysostom takes it for granted that Jesus actually articulated the cup prayer, which is also fundamental to his understanding of this as a scene providing convincing proofs. However, in his *Hom.* 67 on John he muddles his case. Jesus was so troubled that he even sought deliverance in terms of escape (διαφυγεῖν).[21] Thus Chrysostom brings in the cup prayer. He argues that the agony must have been real since it caused Jesus to consider the prayer "Father, save me from this hour." This prayer is equivalent, according to Chrysostom, to the cup prayer in the synoptic traditions, but with a turn in meaning.

20 PG 59.371a; NPNF 14:249

21 PG 59.371a; NPNF 14:249.

In Chrysostom's gospel harmonious reading, Jesus does not really ask for deliverance, since he realizes that this hour was precisely the time for which he had come. The cup prayer is therefore an option contemplated by Jesus but never really voiced. It is a prayer he considered but refrained from; it represents only the troubled mind within Jesus. This brings to mind Tertullian's *recordatus* that mediated the two parts of the prayer.[22] Instead he prayed: "Father, glorify your Name." He is unable to ask for deliverance since this is the hour for which he has come, so he offers another prayer instead. The prayer of John 12:28 ("Father, glorify your name") is presented as the opposite of praying for deliverance: "Although my trouble urges me to say this [i.e. 'save me'], yet I say the opposite, 'Glorify Your Name,' that is Lead me henceforth to the cross." Jesus finds himself drawn to the cup prayer, but he refrains from uttering it.

Chrysostomos' interpretation of "Father, glorify your name" in effect strives to equate it with "your will be done." By uniting the synoptic traditions and John's Gospel, Chrysostom finds the second prayer and John converging, but he also runs into problems, although he is hardly aware of the confusion he creates. The idea of a coherent New Testament prevails and is in itself a reason for keeping things united, thus reminding us of the influential role of Scripture upon the interpretation of disputed passages.[23]

## 17.5 Altruistic Agony

Chrysostom emphasizes strongly that the agony was due primarily to the situation in which Jesus found himself. Although Jesus was also a teacher acting out his lessons, the agony demonstrated that he was deeply affected by his troubles. While the cup prayer was only contemplated, the agony was real. Hence, there is a motivation beyond that of passing on instruction by his actions. In the Matthew homily, Chrysostom offers a revealing reading of Jesus' saying to the disciples: "Sleep on now, and take your rest (ἀναπαύεσθε)."[24] Having first urged them to stay awake, Jesus now offers them "rest." This term takes on another meaning here as a common term for salvation in many early Christian texts.[25] This is what the divine dispensation now offers them. Thus Chrysostom brings

22 Chapter 15.1.5 of the present study.

23 See e.g. Chapter 11.3 in the present study.

24 PG 58.747a; NPNF 10:498.

25 See Lampe, *A Patristic Greek English Lexicon*, s.v.; Judith Hoch Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Truth: Early Christian Homiletics of Rest* (SBLDS 166; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998).

together Gethsemane and Golgotha; they are united in bringing "rest" to the disciples. The agony anticipates his dying on the cross to bring salvation. *Hom. John* 67[26] says that Jesus did not ask for deliverance because the agony was beneficial (τὸ χρήσιμον) to others. Jesus' agony is motivated by being profitable;[27] his agony was altruistic, beneficial to others. Through Jesus' refusal to escape the moment of agony, Chrysostom envisages the truly altruistic and saving nature of Jesus' ministry, which culminated in the cross and his refusal to pray for escape, providing deliverance for others.

26 PG 59.371a.
27 NPNF 14:249.

CHAPTER 18

# Jerome: Gethsemane—An Incident of *Propatheia*

In his commentary on Matthew, Book 4, Jerome addresses the relevant passage in chapter 26:36–46.[1] Two major concerns can be gleaned from his interpretation. First, Jesus did not suffer from any of the passions, including fear. The philosophical concept of passions is a fundamental assumption in his interpretation. Second, Jesus' sorrow was purely altruistic. Cultural parameters on death and fear resonate in both these concerns. Let us see how this unfolds in Jerome's comments.

## 18.1 Altruistic Agony

Jerome's comment on the narrative introduction in Matt 26:36 is telling. Jesus asks his disciples to await his return "while the Lord prayed alone for *everyone* (*pro cunctis*)." Jesus did not pray out of agony for his own destiny but out of his concern for everybody. Accordingly, the scene is portrayed as an intercession and the prayer is seen as anticipating the cross, which, of course, paves the way for an altruistic interpretation. The prayer becomes an intercession anticipating the purpose of his suffering on the cross: "he prays for all, just as also he suffers for all (*solus orat pro omnibus sicut et solus patitur pro universis*, 26.43)." In his tractate *Against the Pelagians*, Jerome says that the drops of blood gushed forth (*guttae sanguinis*) in the garden (*Pelag*. 2.16),[2] and that these drops of blood were to be shed in full in the passion (*totum erat in passione fusurus*). The mentioning of blood thus bridges Gethsemane and Golgotha. Jerome compares Jesus' agony to Jonah, who sorrowfully prayed for Nineveh. This brings to mind a passage like Matt 23:37–38 where Jesus bemoans Jerusalem (cf. Luke 19:41),[3] although Jerome does not bring that out explicitly. From his exposition, it is nonetheless clear that Jerome combines such a passage with the agony in the garden. Especially in Luke's Gospel, the prayers of Jesus are staged as

1 The Latin text is CCSL 77:253–57; the English translation is *St. Jerome: Commentary on Matthew* (tr. Thomas P. Scheck, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008).

2 CCSL 80:75.25–27.

3 It is, of course, highly relevant to note that according to Luke 19:41 Jesus cried over Jerusalem, which forms a link to the emotional agony in Gethsemane, particularly as it is fashioned in the longer Lukan version.

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intercessions (Luke 13:8–9; 22:32; 23:34), though the last passage is a later addition. Interpreting Gethsemane in terms of intercession falls into this Lukan pattern.

Jesus' intercessory prayer in Gethsemane is "on account of the most wretched Judas, and the falling-away of the apostles, who were scandalized, and the rejection of the people of the Jews, and the overturning of pitiful Jerusalem" (26.37). This interpretation comes to Jerome not only through contemplating the woes of Jerusalem, but also from considering the meaning of "unto death" (ἕως θανάτου, Matt 26:38). He achieves this by drawing on Jonah 4:9, where the prophet says: λελύπημαι ἐγὼ ἕως θανάτου. To Jerome, Jonah prefigures Christ,[4] so Jonah's sorrow anticipates Christ's agony in Gethsemane and provides a helping hand in understanding what caused the sorrowful prayer. Jonah's emotional outburst for the withering bush is taken as his concern for his "dwelling place (*tabernaculum suum*)," which he was unwilling to see perish. Jesus is likewise concerned for his "dwelling place," which to him was Jerusalem and the Jews. Like Jonah, Jesus was not sorrowful "on account of death, but "even to death, (*non propter mortem sed usque as mortem*) until he delivers his apostles by his Passion." Jerome's interpretation of the preposition is telling. Jesus was not concerned about his impending death, but about being able to complete through his death what he had been sent to achieve.

In this way, Jerome removes from Jesus' words in Matt 26:38 any concern about impending death. The preposition ἕως is only a reference to time, "until his death."[5] Jesus remained sorrowful until his death had accomplished what his intercessory prayer was about, the salvation of humankind. The cup prayer is to be interpreted accordingly, says Jerome. It is not uttered out of agony about self but is intimately connected with his death for the benefit of others. Jerome makes the point that Jesus does not mention "the cup," but rather "*this* cup (τὸ ποτήριον τοῦτο)," "that is, the one belonging to the people of the Jews." The level of sophistication is certainly heightened, as this demonstrative is now brought into the discussion. We have seen above that Origen made the same observation, but with a notably different outcome.[6]

4 See *Jérôme, commentaire sur Jonah* (ed. Yves-Marie Duval; SC 323, Paris: Cerf, 1985), 107–108.

5 The preposition triggered an early discussion and Jerome was certainly not alone in his interpretation; see also Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 90 (GCS 38:11.207); Hilary of Poitiers, *In Matthaeum* 31.5 (SC 258:230–32).

6 Chapter 14 of the present study.

## 18.2 Predisposition to Passion

Jerome is aware that some interpret the sadness of Jesus' soul as a passion, open to philosophical blame, but that view qualifies them as heretics (*heretici*),[7] since they have not understood that his sadness is the Savior's for those who are going to perish (*perituros*, 26.37). Jesus' sadness is thereby theologically qualified. This piece of information implies that Jerome addresses this story from Jesus' life against competing readings.

The role assigned to the philosophical term "passion" here takes us to the second concern of Jerome, the issue of the affections involved. Jerome works with two fundamental distinctions. One is between human and divine affection or emotion, the other between *propatheia* and *pathos*, a distinction fundamental to the Stoic philosophy that we have come across frequently in the present study.[8] The affectionate prayer for the salvation of the Jews and others is a divine emotion. It is the affection of the Savior, and finds Scriptural proof in Ezek 16:43LXX, where God says to Israel that "in all these things you made me sorrowful (ἐλύπεις με ἐν πᾶσι τούτοις)." This is to Jerome divine sorrow for the destiny of Israel, and precisely what Jesus experienced in Gethsemane.

Jerome does admit that Jesus also felt human sorrow attributable to the soul (*animus*); it is thus restricted to his human nature.[9] In his comment on Matt 26:37, Jerome even says that the Lord being full of sadness proves "the truth of the humanity he has assumed." Gethsemane is thus a dogmatic prooftext similar to what goes on in "Hippolytus" and John Chrysostom. Jerome, however, urges an important distinction be made here, and this is where his philosophical legacy comes into play. The distinction in the interpretation of this story is between passion (*passio*) and pre-passion (*propassio*).[10] Jerome reasons from the assumption that passions in themselves are sinful, while pre-passions are not; they are nonetheless, somewhat ambiguous. Richard A. Layton has laid out the relevance of this Stoic notion. There are two phases of emotional causation. *Propatheia* is a spontaneous reaction, but is still alarming since it implies a temptation to move to the next phase, that of *patheia*

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7 It is by no means clear to whom Jerome is referring, but likely candidates include Arius, Eunomius, or Apollinaris of Laodicea, all seen as holding views tending to undermine the divinity of Jesus.

8 See e.g. Chapter 2.5.3.

9 We noted in Chapter 4.1.4 that Origen took advantage of the same observation.

10 Jerome argues in ways very similar to Origen in his *Comm. Matt.* 90 (GCS 38/11:205–207): *multum enim interest inter tristari et incipere tristare* (there is a big difference between being troubled and to begin to be troubled).

themselves, which are rational dispositions.[11] The ideal that forces this distinction to be made is the equanimity labeled *apatheia*.[12]

The word "began" (ἤρξατο) in the phrase "he began to be sorrowful" (Mark 14:33; Matt 26:37) attracted Jerome's philosophical interest:[13] "He began to be sorrowful through pre-passion. For it is one thing to be sorrowful, another to *begin* to be sorrowful." The first, which is about fear of death (*timore patendi*) is to be blamed morally, while the second is not yet, because it has not received voluntary assent; it is about mere predispositions to passions or *coeperit contristari* (26.37).

In his comments on Matt 5:28[14] ("Whoever looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart"), Jerome explains this in detail: "Passions is regarded as a vice, but pre-passion (though it may have blame in its commencement), is not reputed as a sin." In the passage in Matt 5:28, Jesus speaks of being struck with pre-passion, of consenting and making an affection out of pre-passions, turning them into passions proper. If they get that far, they are to be rebuked. Jerome applies this moral philosophical pattern to grasp Jesus' agony in Gethsemane, encouraged by the appearance of "began" in Mark and Matthew's text.

It is not a real agony, although Jerome asserts otherwise: *vere . . . contristatus* (26.37). In the first place, it is affectionate intercession, which makes it purely altruistic, and second, it is only a predisposition to passion. Jerome's comments on Matt 5:28 make it clear that the backdrop is a philosophically shaped temptation theology. Jesus faces only a disposition to sin, since he is divine, and thus cannot really be tempted.[15] For a human soul, however, it is impossible not to be tempted (26.41). Therefore, Jerome cites the Lord's Prayer here ("Lead us not into temptation"). Jerome appears to think that Jesus in Gethsemane reminded

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11 Richard A. Layton, "*Propaitheia*: Origen and Didymus on the Origin of Passions," VC 54 (2000): 262–82; "From 'Holy Passion' to Sinful Emotion: Jerome and the Doctrine of Propassio" in *Dominico Eloquio—In Lordly Eloquence: Essays on Patristic Exegesis in Honor of Robert L. Wilken* (ed. P.M. Blowers et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 280–93.

12 With a philosophical turn of the portrayals of the ideal believer and of God in the Epistle of James (Jas 1:6–8, 12–16; 4:8) it becomes clear why Jesus in Gethsemane became a problem to philosophically trained persons like Jerome.

13 See the exegesis of this verb in Chapter 5.2.2.

14 Book 1; CCSL 77:30–31.

15 Layton, "*Propatheia*," 279–81 demonstrates how Didymus the Blind interprets both Gethsemane and Heb 4:15 in light of this philosophy, thus proving the role of Gethsemane in that letter according to its early reception. *Propatheia* is not merely not sin but a "necessary condition for complete human experience."

his disciples of the instruction he previously passed on to them in the Lord's Prayer.

Finally, Jerome denies any conflict between Jesus and the Father. He embraces the will of the Father, "which is not contrary to the will of the Son, since he himself says through the prophet: 'I have willed to do your will, my God.' " This is taken from Ps 40:8 (39:9LXX), spoken by David.[16] Not unlike Justin, Jerome reads the Gethsemane prayer in the light of knowledge that the Old Testament might shed on it. In order to reach a full comprehension of this story and its implications, the net of sources has to be cast wider than the gospels, which represent only some specimens of a phenomenon witnessed more widely. Jerome turns to the Prophets and Psalms to find the true meaning of the gospels.

It sounds like an echo of ancient martyr texts when Jerome comments on Matt 26:46 ("Rise, let us go; behold the one who is going to hand me over is at hand") as follows: "Let them not find us as ones who are afraid and withdrawn (*quasi timentes et retractantes*). Let us go to death of our own accord, that they may see the confidence (*confidentiam*) and joy (*gaudium*) of the one about to suffer." Jerome thus rounds off the Gethsemane scene in a way that makes Jesus an example to martyrs. In that conclusion the second prayer comes at the cost of the cup prayer.

## 18.3 Theology and Philosophy at a Crossroads

Jerome's comments provide a window into how many Christian intellectuals found ways to cope with a biblical tradition portraying Jesus as emotionally out of control, in agony about death, and seeking a way out of his own fate. Such a picture was indeed troubling to Jerome. We can follow closely how he is guided, step after step, by theological and philosophical predispositions. The unity between Father and Son is fundamental to Jerome; they have a united will to save humankind from perishing. Within this unity it is difficult to imagine agony on the part of Jesus for a death which was the very means of manifesting this purpose or to envisage a conflict of wills. In order to minimize even the appearance of any conflict, Jerome attributes the two important dicta of Jesus in the relevant passage, the sorrowful prayer and the embracing of his Father's will, to his human and divine natures, respectively. In commenting upon this

16 Jerome unfolds this in his comments on Ps 107:27. Jesus did not drink the cup unwillingly. Since he knew that it had to be done, he emptied it voluntary, clearly a reference to Gethsemane: *Nec invitus bibi calicem, quem cum scirem esse potandum, sponte hausi.*

passage where Jesus is so affected, Jerome states that his real affections are found in the second prayer, not in his concern about his own destiny. This has theological implications beyond what Jerome addresses here. He claims that the prayer proves the true humanity of Jesus and simultaneously argues that his embracing of the Father's will was a divine act (26.39). The two natures of Christ are here about to fall apart, and it becomes difficult to see how an incarnated Jesus is fully involved in his own salvation-bringing death.

Furthermore, not even the distinction between human and divine natures is able to fully overcome the problem of Jesus agonized. Jerome appears less than fully satisfied with his own solutions and therefore claims that Jesus in the garden has a pre-passion, in philosophical terms. The problem that then remains is that a prayer that Jerome first explains as purely altruistic, in accordance with Jesus' suffering to save humankind from perishing, at the end of the day implies sin on the part of Jesus himself. This ambiguity is implied in the very notion of *propatheia*, as Matt 5:28 illustrates perfectly well.[17] The agony of Jesus is a demonstration of his true humanity, but at the same time it is divine rather than human sorrow. Thus the connection that helped Jerome to overcome the problem of passion strikes us as unsolved in the end. This theological problem emerges without being addressed fully, a sign of how challenging the picture of a Jesus agonized over his own destiny was to a theologian trained in contemporary philosophy.

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17 For Jerome's ambiguous attitude to pre-passions, see Layton, "From 'Holy Passion' to Sinful Emotion," 286–88.

CHAPTER 19

# The Empress Eudocia's Cento: Homeric and Emotional Hero at Gethsemane

This final chapter before wrapping up the investigation addresses a distinctly idiosyncratic reception of Jesus in Gethsemane, as found in a Homeric version of the gospels, the so called *Homerocentones*. Centos were developed as kind of a diversion inside the classical legacy of epic literature. Centonists pieced together verses from the classical epics to form a new text, altered but still coherent. In the words of Scott McGill, "[t]o present a cento is always on one level to trade in cultural capital and to affirm one's highbrow credentials."[1] The epics were viewed as buried treasures of wisdom to be unearthed. Christian centonists brought these open texts to their completion in reading them as pagan allegorical prophecy.[2]

The way Homer was perceived in antiquity more generally is fundamental to the Christian use of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which were not only the primary texts but also omniscient texts. With the help of interpretation, Homer's writings were considered encyclopedic. Everything could by way of interpretation be extracted from these texts. This is of course the reason that questions pertaining to interpretation flourished in ancient Homeric readings. Although Plato says the following with irony, he actually confirms how these epics regarded as both inspired and omniscient: "these poets know all the arts and all things human pertaining to virtue and vice, and all things divine" (*Rep*. 598E).

Homer could also be used to understand things of which he himself was not necessarily aware (Ps. Plutarch, *On Homer* 218). The picture of Homer as one who knew everything made a deep impression. An anonymous schoolboy has aptly expressed this on his writing board, containing the following text: Θεὸς οὐδ' ἄνθρωπος Ὅμηρος, meaning "Homer is a God, not a human being".[3]

1 Scott McGill, *Virgil Recomposed: The Mythological and Secular Centos in Antiquity* (American Classical Studies 48; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), XVI.

2 On the centos, see Sandnes, *The Gospel 'According to Homer and Virgil,'* 107–40 with references.

3 See Erich Ziebarth, *Aus der antiken Schule: Sammlung griechischer Texte auf Papyrus Holztafeln Ostraka* (Bonn: Marcus & Weber, 1913), 12 (text nr. 26), and Raffaella Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (ASP 36; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 220 for detailed information on this text, which in her list appears as nr. 200. She also

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This was the impression given to many students of Homer. He held the key to knowledge on all topics and was thus more than an ordinary human being. Dion of Prusa (Chrysostom) addresses in his *Or.* 53 the issue of Homer's inspiration and considers him a prophet. The centonist conceives of herself as an inspired interpreter bringing out the full meaning of Homer's prophetic messages. It follows from this that the epics were open to yielding new texts, which served as an invitation to accommodate the story of Jesus and the gospels into a respectable Christianity, as judged by the classical legacy.[4]

The empress Eudocia composed a Homeric cento early in the fifth century.[5] Eudocia was an Athenian who in 421 became the wife of Emperor Theodosius II. For reasons not obvious, Eudocia fell out of favor and left the court, finally settling in the Holy Land. In the midst of the biblical lands, this classical Greek text came to life.

Eudocia's Homeric cento devotes much attention to the Gethsemane scene, which starts in line 1535 (CP 1543):[6] "But when it was the third watch of the night, and the stars had turned their course" (*Od.* 12.312). Much attention is given to the instruction to stay vigilant and not fall asleep. The backdrop of the whole scene is the role given to the suitors in the Homeric epic. As I have demonstrated in my book *The Gospel 'According to Homer and Virgil': Cento and Canon* (2011), the suitors in Eudocia's cento are different representations of sinful humanity.[7] They represent allegorically the power of sin that Jesus had to put right. It is worth noting that the suitors appear again at the very end of her cento, in line 2335 (CP 2345): "The suitors were troubled and downcast in spirit." Against the background of Eudocia's use of the suitors at the beginning of her cento, this line is to be seen as summing up the message of her poem; the suitors are finally defeated. Jesus' agony in Gethsemane is to be seen against

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refers to PMich VIII 1100 where the same maxim is found: "A god, not a man was Homer" (p. 222 text nr. 209).

4 In my *The Gospel 'According to Homer and Virgil,'* 65–105 I give two main reasons for the composition of centos; one is the general feeling of a lack of culture in the Gospels and the other is the specific decree (362 CE) of Julian the Emperor on teaching, which many Christians saw as a ban on their participation in the classical legacy.

5 Sandnes, *The Gospel 'According to Homer and Virgil,'* 181–82.

6 This is according to *Homerocentones Eudociae Augustae* (ed. Mark Usher; Teubneriana; Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1999). My references will be given according to this edition, with the Conscriptio Prima (CP) according to *Homerocentones* (ed. Rocco Schembra, CCSG 62; Turnhout: Brepols, 2007) in parentheses. The translation is a slightly altered version of Homer's writings in the LCL edition, where the necessary alterations are made according to how the lines are used in the cento.

7 Sandnes, *The Gospel 'According to Homer and Virgil,'* 184, 189–96.

this wider background, a fact that is decisive for construing the scene as an *agôn*. The entire ministry of Jesus comes into play in the way that Eudocia construes the garden scene; it may be considered what literary critics call *mis en abyme*, a miniature version of the whole story within which it is found.[8]

## 19.1 Jesus Agonized

In line 1560 (CP 1568), the need of all men to turn to the gods in prayer is noted: "for good is it to lift up hands to God,[9] if so be, he will have pity" (1562; CP 1570). This general outlook introduces our issue. Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane is then rendered, first with some lines describing the distress (ἀνάγκη) that came upon him and caused the prayer (1566; CP 1574). This line about Jesus' distress is taken from *Od.* 10.273. Odysseus says that ἀνάγκη lays upon him since his crew has been taken captive by Circe and turned into swine. Jesus agony' in Gethsemane as unfolded in Mark's Gospel echoes Odysseus' agony in *Od.* 10 during his last night with Circe before descending to Hades. *Od.* 10.306. 480–4. 496–99 is a vivid description of his fear of Hades; his spirit was broken and he cried when faced with the prospect.

According to Dennis R. MacDonald, the Gethsemane story was modeled after this Homeric story.[10] The only line from this Homeric story appearing here is *Od.* 10.273. Hence, MacDonald's view on this particular point does not find affirmation with Eudocia, who indulged in telling the story of Jesus in Homeric language.[11] Bruce Louden takes *Od.* 20.24–54 as analogy; this text is about the hero's lying awake, tossing and turning the night before he confronts the suitors.[12] His discomfort is physical; he is compared to a sausage full of

8 The term is borrowed from the practice of putting a shield within a larger shield and means a portion that displays the subject of the whole piece; see Brant, *John*, 151–52. This may be illustrated by how John 12:31 works within that Gospel; the whole ministry of Jesus is condensed into the short "now the ruler of this world will be driven out," thus construing Jesus' mission, his death, and resurrection as the ultimate exorcism.

9 The Homeric epic of course has Zeus here.

10 Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 124–7, 183–4; see also his "My Turn: A Critique of Critics of 'Mimesis Criticism'." Personal website (www.iac.cgu/drm/My_Turn; accessed November 4th, 2014).

11 MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*, 124–7, 183–4; see also his "My Turn. . . ."

12 Bruce Louden, *Homer's Odyssey and the Near East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 280–82.

blood, about to be roasted. Then Athena comes to him and reassures him of divine aid. Louden naturally finds Luke's longer version most relevant here. Louden's suggestion is worth noticing, primarily since Odysseus struggle with the suitors forms the backdrop against which Eudocia presents Jesus' struggle aganst sin and evil (see above). Furthermore, lines from *Od.* 20.266, 267 and 314 appear in her Homeric Gethsemane scene. But no line is taken from the passage suggested by Louden. It seems, therefore, that the striking similarities pointed out by Louden did not attract Eudocia's attention. Interestingly, lines 24–28, four in row, are taken by Eudocia from Od. 20, the passage mentioned by Louden, to make Peter's reaction as he regrets his having denied Jesus (1808–11; CP 1871–21).

Jesus' distress is detailed in line 1567 (CP 1575): "and my heart beats loudly in my breast" is taken from *Il.* 13.282. This sentence is at home in a context in which the differences between the coward (δειλὸς ἀνὴρ) and the man of valor or courage (ἄλκῖμος) are discerned. The coward alters the color of his face; his spirit finds no peace and he is therefore unable to stay calm in critical situations. His thoughts concern dangers and death's approach, and "his heart beats loudly in his breast." His teeth chatter in his mouth.

With the brave man, however, things look different indeed; his color does not change,[13] he is not seized by fear, and he loves participating in war (*Il.* 13.274–94). The line chosen to portray the agony of Jesus is therefore taken from a relatively detailed description of the coward as opposed to the brave man. There is not much heroic to be associated with the line. It is, of course, difficult to know how conscious the centonist was about the context from which her lines were drawn. From the rest of the cento lines chosen, it appears unlikely that there is a deliberate concern to depict Jesus as a coward. Two observations support such a conclusion. In the first place, Jesus is clearly involved in a battle (1572–73; CP 1580–81) in which he will obtain glory or renown (κῦδος);[14] furthermore, he appears with valor and strength after being fortified by an angel (see below).

It is worth noting that there is no hesitation whatsoever in portraying Jesus in the grasp of his emotions:

> 1574 (CP 1582) He burst into tears (δακρύσας), and withdrew apart from his comrades (*Il.* 1.349).

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13 This corresponds with how physiognomic theories present the brave in contrast to the coward; see Chapters 2.2.2 and 2.4 of the present study.

14 In Homer this is a common term for the pride or glory characteristic of heroes; see LSJ s.v.

1575 (CP 1583) His heart was stricken, and up through his nostrils (*Od.* 24.318)
1576 (CP 1584) shot a keen pang, as he saw his dear father (*Od.* 24.319).
1577 (CP 1585) Then he stood in the midst of a battle (ἐν ἀγῶνι), and in streams the sweat flowed (*Il.* 23.507).

### 19.1.1 *Emotional, Like Achilles and Laertes*

Eudocia portrays the agony with lines taken from two key scenes in Homer. The first is Achilles' wrath against Agamemnon, which starts the whole story of the war against Troy. The *Iliad's* opening line announces it as the story that was caused by Achilles' wrath: "The wrath do thou sing, o goddess, of Peleus' son, Achilles ..." (*Il.* 1.1). Emotions run high in the tale from the very outset Achilles addresses his mother Thetis, sitting in the depths of the sea, weeping that he was doomed to die in battle without having received due honor from Zeus (*Il.* 1.352–56). Against the backdrop of these emotions, line 1578 (CP 1586) introduces Jesus' prayer: "Earnestly did he pray to his dear father with hands outstretched" (*Il.* 1.351). This is the opening line from Achilles' complaint to his mother, but the centonist has, of course, replaced Achilles' mother with Jesus' father.[15] Within Homeric parameters it is hardly possible to find a more emotional line than this one, since it brings to mind the dramatic story of love and war which is the core of the *Iliad*. Patroclus, Achilles' bosom friend is also part of this context, and when he is killed by Hector (*Il.* 16.823–67), Achilles' emotions are again described dramatically (*Il.* 18.17–126). Jesus' emotions in Gethsemane fit into this context. There is no emotionless Jesus here; on the contrary, Jesus is tormented in Gethsemane, portrayed in words taken from two iconic scenes of emotions in Homer.

The other scene that comes into play is the homecoming of Odysseus,[16] which guides that epic throughout and culminates in *Od.* 24, equally important for the plot in the *Odyssey* as Achilles' wrath is in the *Iliad*. The emotions of Laertes, Odysseus' father, have been transferred to Jesus' relationship to his father. The moment of Odysseus' homecoming is certainly emotional, and Eudocia finds it helpful for portraying Jesus' relationship to his father in

15 Such observations, which recur throughout the cento, are important for my interrogation of Dennis R. MacDonald's use of *Homerocentones* as a model for how the Gospels came into being; see Karl Olav Sandnes, "Imitatio Homeri? An Appraisal of Dennis R. MacDonald's 'Mimesis Criticism,'" *JBL* 124 (2005): 715–32 and *The Gospel 'According to Homer and Virgil,'* 238–43.

16 For this motif as it applies in the cento, see Sandnes, *The Gospel 'According to Homer and Virgil,'* 222–28.

Gethsemane. In this portrayal, an emotionless Jesus is no ideal at all, in accordance with how Homer portrays some of his heroes. However, these emotions are very much about relationships and failure to find appropriate glory. When it comes to fleeing from battle or danger, that is certainly something else.

Line 1577, taken from *Il.* 23.507, construes the Gethsemane scene precisely as warfare or a battle. The Homeric context is a horse race where the horses are those from whom the sweat runs in streams. This is transferred to Jesus' reaction in the garden; Luke's longer version and Homer are paired up here. This demonstrates that the lines making up the cento are chosen according to a given text outside of Homer, the gospel traditions, which actually drive the agenda. Eudocia clearly draws on the longer Lukan version, which is also affirmed in her mentioning a strengthening angel (see below). It is worth noting, though, that she does not depict Jesus as a hero bereft of emotions.

## 19.2 The Prayer

Now follows the prayer proper (1580–96; CP 1587–1603):

1580 O Father, has thou no indignation to behold these violent deeds? (*Il.* 5.872)
1581 In such wise way now do you show favour to men of wantonness (*Il.* 13.633)
1582 which ones dishonor me and which are guiltless, (*Od.* 19.498)
1583 they who committed a monstrous act in their blindness and wanton wickedness, (*Od.* 24.458)
1584 now they are minded to slay the well-loved son. (*Od.* 5.18)
1585 Hostile men and ruthless that are hard anigh (ἐγγὺς, *Il.* 24.365)
1586 who speak with respect, but mean ill thereafter. (*Od.* 18.168)
1587 But if so be thou hast power (εἰ δύνασαί), guard your own son, (*Il.* 1.393)
1588 if indeed I am your son, and you declare yourself my father. (*Od.* 9.529)
1589 If this thing is as you say, then must it be my good pleasure. (*Il.* 1.564)
1590 I will go down to Hades and shine among the dead. (*Od.* 12.383)
1591 I will give light to all these men. (*Od.* 18.317)
1592 and quickly will I come again, when to the full I have borne them aid, (*Il.* 12.369)

1593 if your heart consents thereto, so at least would I have it. (*Il.* 23.894)
1594 I will lie down when I am dead; now let me win glorious renown (κλέος ἐσθλόν). (*Il.* 18.121)
1595 Now I deem that I shall honour thee in my heart even more. (*Il.* 22.235)
1596 But, Father grant to me fair renown (κλέος ἐσθλόν). (*Od.* 3.380)

Jesus prays to his Father as the well-loved son, thus echoing a key notion in traditions about Gethsemane. The prayer is a lamentation, asking why his father does not care that his son is facing enemies. It thus brings to mind the style of many Old Testament psalms. The enemies are described in lines about both Trojans and Achaeans, depending on the perspective of the lines that Eudocia found helpful. Most important is that the role of the suitors in the *Odyssey* is very much involved. Lines 1582–83 are taken from that particular context. Line 1585 is in the Homeric setting about the Achaeans. This line is useful for demonstrating how the centonist works. This description of enemies was found particular helpful since it spoke about them as drawing near (ἐγγὺς), which resembles how the gospel traditions spoke about Judas (Mark 14:42; Matt 26:46: ἤγγικεν).[17] The following line affirms that Judas is implied; he was the false friend, like the suitors described in their relationship to Telemachos (*Od.* 18.168).[18]

The petition of Jesus makes reference to the power of his Father, thus echoing the gospel traditions in which Jesus' filial status clearly motivates his petitionary prayer, which calls upon the Father's power: εἰ δυνατόν ἐστιν (Mark 14:36; Matt 26:39); εἰ βούλει (Luke 22:42). The centonist chooses her lines rather freely. This can be illustrated with reference to line 1588, which features the Cyclops, the son of Poseidon, addressing his father in a prayer aimed at preventing Odysseus from reaching his destiny of Ithaca. The motif of homecoming is used affirmatively by the centonist, but she also uses lines from a prayer directed precisely against achieving that goal, with her own context altering the meaning.

In accordance with Gethsemane traditions, Eudocia also includes in the prayer Jesus' submissiveness to his Father's will. Somewhat surprisingly, line 1589, which addresses this motif, is taken from a passage where Zeus threatens Hera. In the cento, this is Jesus submitting to his Father's plan and will.

17 For Judas and the suitors, see also lines 1327–30.

18 *Od.* 5.18 cited in line 1584 is also about Telemachos.

The Homeric context at times informs Eudocia's choices, while on other occasions she chooses lines in spite of their context. Her primary context is not Homer, but the Gospel traditions that are already well established: "… Homer is not the text that brought the story into being. The life of Jesus is the primary, Homer the secondary."[19]

## 19.3 Dying Gloriously

It is worth noting that the cup prayer is never raised, but only the second part of the prayer about submissiveness. What Jesus expects from his Father is to be protected and most importantly to win glory. Accordingly, the enemies appearing in the text disguised as suitors are all external to Jesus himself. His fight is directed externally throughout. The struggle within Jesus himself as portrayed in the gospels, even in Luke, has no part to play here. Therefore, the text becomes evasive at best when it comes to the first part of the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane. The focus has shifted to what Jesus will accomplish through his death. In line 1593, which echoes the second part of Jesus' prayer about submitting to his Father's will, there is no connection with a troubled prayer but focuses instead on what Jesus will achieve through his death.

The honor and glory of Jesus, his renown, is a matter of much concern and is stated in several lines. Line 1592 makes this something won in battle by citing *Il.* 12.369, a famous battle scene. Line 1594 is taken from Achilles' words as he embarks on the battle with Hector. Achilles says that he will not flee death (φύγε κῆρα), but has his renown (κλέος ἐσθλόν)[20] even if he dies during the fight. Death is of no importance, but glory and renown do matter. This continues a motif from Achilles' prayer to his mother, which Eudocia uses in her cento (see above). Achilles says that he is doomed to die soon, but pleads for his honor (τιμή, *Il.* 1.353–54). This is what a manly man pleads for; he is not concerned about dying, but about his renown and glory. In this cento, Jesus in Gethsemane is described within these parameters. This supports my view, outlined above, that although Jesus is portrayed with a line taken from a standard description of the coward, that original context does not capture how Eudocia saw him; to her, he was the fulfillment of the manly ideals permeating the Homeric epics.[21]

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19 Sandnes, *The Gospel 'According to Homer and Virgil,'* 241.

20 Thus also in *Od.* 3.380, cited in line 1596. The adjective ἐσθλός is often used about the brave and stout, in opposition to the coward (δειλός); see LSJ s.v.

21 The Virgilian cento of Faltonia Betitia Proba does not include Gethsemane at all. The only line that *may* be such a reference is 596–99: "… Unless I am mistaken, the day is already

In Homer this ideal is visible in *Il.* 3.30–52, which says about Alexander (Paris) when faced with Menelaus, whose wife he had abducted:

> His heart was smitten, and back he shrank into the throng of his comrades, avoiding fate. And even as a man at sight of a snake in the glades of a mountain starteth back, and trembling (τρόμος) seizeth his limbs beneath him, and he withdraweth back again and pallor layeth hold of his cheeks; even so did godlike Alexander, seized with fear of Atreus' son, shrink back into the throng of the lordly Trojans. (Murray, LCL)

Hector deems the behavior of his brother shameful; Paris has the power and charm to win ladies but not to engage in battle. It will cause the laughter of the Achaeans to see a man with "a comely form, but no strength in heart nor any valour" (*Il.* 3.44–45).[22] His lack of courage makes the Trojans appear to be cowards (δειδήμονες, *Il.* 3.56).

Hecabe, Hector's wife, praises Hector who died in battle as one who had "no thought of shelter or flight" (*Il.* 24.216; cf. 6.444–46). More precisely, the text refers to fear and escape; Hector did not feel fear, nor did he seek escape.[23] Hector himself, as he is about to embark upon the battle with Achilles that leads to his death, says that he prefers dying gloriously (ἐϋκλειῶς, *Il.* 22.110).

Dying gloriously abbreviates these ideals and formulates a matter of reputation or renown. This is stated very precisely by Hector in the midst of this battle. He realizes that he, in accordance with divine will, is doomed to lose his life in this battle: "... my doom (μοῖρα) is come upon me. Nay, but not without a struggle (μὴ μὰν ἀσπουδί) let me die, neither ingloriously (ἀκλειῶς), but in the working of some great deed for the hearing of men that are yet to be" (*Il.* 22.304–305). In brief, this is how masculinity is celebrated in Homer and the legacy upon which Eudocia builds her cento.

This comes through very clearly in the scene where Hector hands his son over to his wife before his fight with Aias. He prays that his glory will one day surpass that of his father, saying to his wife:

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come. Chase away your worries. This task will be mine, and my decision does not fail me. A single head will be given for many. After having spoken thus, he was silent and at last let rest come to his limbs." Translation taken from Sigrid Schottenius Cullhed, *Proba the Prophet: The Christian Virgilian Cento of Faltonia Betitia Proba* (Mnemosyne Supplements 378; Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015).

22 οὕνεκα καλὸν εἶδος ἔπ', ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔστι βίη φρεσὶν τις ἀλκή.

23 οὔτε φόβου μεμνημένον οὔτ' ἀλεωρῆς.

> ... Dear wife, in no wise, I pray thee, grieve overmuch at heart; no man beyond my fate shall send me forth to Hades; only his doom, methinks, no man hath ever escaped, be he coward or valiant, when once he had been born. Nay, go thou to the house and busy thyself with thine own tasks, the loom and the distaff, and bid thy handmaids ply their work; but war shall be for men (πόλεμος δ᾽ ἄνδρεσσι), for all, but most of all for me, of them that dwell in Ilios. (*Il.* 6.485–93)

The traditional distinction between the sexes in terms of domestic and public roles comes into play here and thus serves to enhance the gendered nature of the ideal of battle and renown. The anguished, cup-prayer Jesus seeking a way out does not fit easily into this manly ideal. Hence, that aspect is also missing here.

## 19.4 Strengthened and Awakening

Line 1597 continues the story by mentioning the angel, thus affirming Eudocia's familiarity with the longer Lukan version. The angel strengthened him by addressing his dark heart, a metaphor for distress (*Il.* 5.664). Telemachos, moving godlike among the suitors (*Od.* 1.324), summarizes to the centonist that Jesus in Gethsemane besieged the enemies, finally defeating them in the resurrection.[24] The combat won in the garden, however, is only the beginning of a battle to be continued on the cross (lines 1605–606). In this way Gethsemane represents an anticipation of what Jesus faced on the cross. What follows is the narrative closing of this scene, which then leads to Jesus being arrested (CP 1604–16):

> 1597 Then an angel from the starry heaven came, (*Il.* 2.786; 19.130)
> 1598 his dark heart within him was filled with valour and strength. (*Il.* 17.499)
> 1599 At once he went among the suitors, a godlike man. (*Od.* 1.324)
> 1600 They rose to go to their rest throughout the city, and for long remain seated, (*Od.* 2.397)
> 1601 for sleep was falling upon their eyelids. (*Od.* 2.398)
> 1602 He made answer, and spoke to them again, saying (*Od.* 21.206)
> 1603 'No longer on the beds pluck the flower of sweet sleep.' (*Od.* 10.548)

24 See Sandnes, *The Gospel 'According to Homer and Virgil,'* 205–7, 220–28.

1604 To sleep the whole night through beseems not a man that is counselor (βουληφόρον ἄνδρα).[25] (*Il.* 2.24)
1605 But let us go, for verily the night is waning and dawn draws near. (*Il.* 10.251)
1606 Let us go, but still hereafter there is to be measureless toil (ἀμέτρητος πόνος), (*Od.* 23.249)
1607 long and hard (πολλὸς καὶ χαλεπός), which I must fulfill to the end (τελέσσαι). (*Od.* 23.250)
1608 So he spoke, and a welcome thing it seemed to them to lie with him. (*Od.* 8.295)
1609 Then it was that sweet sleep fled from the eyelids. (*Od.* 12.366)

The perspective now looks forward; Gethsemane anticipates what is yet to be completed at Golgotha. Jesus faces toils that will come upon him in full later, clearly envisaging Golgotha. Eudocia conveys in Homeric fashion what we have seen in many other interpreters of the early Church, that Gethsemane is both a rehearsal for and an abbreviation for the passion. Within such an interpretation, the cup prayer simply does not fit.

25 This epithet is used for princes and leaders in Homer, and is a reminder of the male-centered ideals of this literature.

CHAPTER 20

# Gethsemane Discourses

This final chapter serves the three purposes of summarizing our findings, pointing out what issues the Gethsemane scene were seen to entail, and establishing some kind of interaction among the multiple viewpoints involved. These tasks are undertaken together, proceeding from the issues addressed in the discourses. As stated in the introductory chapter, it is due to *my* construction that scattered voices address each other in a fictitious conversation. The constructive or fictitious part applies particularly to the interaction between the sources, and the study has demonstrated that real discourses did take place. It is, therefore, appropriate to speak of discourses in the plural.

As for the discourses, three observations are crucial. First, discourse involves some conversation, dispute, or interaction. Second, this interaction is contextual in a twofold sense. It is situated within a setting that might have repercussions for the conversation. Furthermore, the interaction or negotiations involved includes how the issue at stake interrelates with wider concerns and agendas. Finally, we do not imply one continuous progressive discourse, but a complexity of discourses, some intertwined and some separated both in time and geography.

## 20.1 Traces of Real Discourses

Traces of interactions, debates, and confrontations have surfaced throughout the study, so embarking on a construction of interactions is simply to move some steps beyond the discussions witnessed in the sources. The interaction laid out is at points more theological in nature than genuinely historical. The first explicit reference to views on Jesus' emotions and prayer in Gethsemane that were "othered" is found in Justin Martyr in the middle of second century. After Justin it becomes increasingly clear that the relevant texts introduced competing views on Gethsemane, some attributed to "heretics." Whether they are orthodox or not is of no special interest here. It is simply a fact that there was a theological *agôn* regarding this particular incident from Jesus' life.

Not long after Justin Martyr, we witness not only competing views from insiders, but also criticisms and polemics from outsiders. The fact that this criticism echoed the cultural standards of the day makes it likely that it voiced sentiments that were in existence before being articulated in detailed

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treatments of Gethsemane. The fact that John transformed this tradition so radically is likely due not only to a different theological framework, but also to his sharing at least some of their sentiments. Although John does not subscribe to the philosophy of ἀπαθεία, we have seen that this philosophical concept accompanied Christian theology on God, Christ, and prayer fairly early in the Christian tradition. This means that the convictions that drove some of the general criticism of Jesus found its way into Christian thinking on this incident as well.

Before Justin, we are obliged to rely on educated assumptions. The alterations taking place within the Synoptic Gospels are indicative of some shifting ground. The differences among them—even between Mark and Matthew—may not necessarily be alterations of received traditions, but they bear witness to various accents with regard to Gethsemane already in circulation in the first century of the Common Era. At no level is a unanimous interpretation of this incident available. From early on, the transmission of this story was embedded in attempts to make sense of it by shifting focus and perspective. The many minor differences that we noted push the text in certain directions, some of which are aimed at coming to terms with a potentially embarrassing story. My exegesis of the Fourth Gospel implies that John interacted by transforming existing traditions and did so according to theological parameters that influenced other evolutions.

The textual history of Luke 22:43–44 is indicative of an early discussion on the text. I have argued that the longer version probably shaped the shorter version in a certain direction; be that as it may, the two versions in themselves are an early attestation not only of concerns about textual basis, but also of how to perceive Gethsemane.

All this means that although some of the interactions undertaken in this study are fictitious, they do at least proceed from traces of historical discourses. We have uncovered ongoing discourses but they do not necessarily form a continuous dialogue or relate to one another. Scattered in time and geography, they still provide evidence of a challenge with which many struggled to come to terms. Some of the issues touched upon invite independent studies far beyond what can be attempted here. This chapter brings together the findings in this investigation and takes the observations some steps further by trying to sketch some of the wider questions involved. The point of departure throughout is not the many issues that may be raised here, but how these issues were triggered by early interpretations of Jesus at prayer in Gethsemane.

This landscape includes dependencies, transformations, independencies, opponents (be they insiders or outsiders), cultural ideals pertaining to key issues in the incident, and frequent use of rhetorical terms; all this makes it

appropriate to take a discursive view of the material, trying to sort out multiple dialogues in the proper context.

## 20.2 Multiple Sources

One important reason for the diversity of Gethsemane interpretations is the wide variety of sources involved. The investigation has demonstrated four groups of sources, all conducive to defining Gethsemane in their own terms. Of course, the sources depend upon the views taken on this episode beforehand; thus there seems to be a two-way movement here, where sources and interpretations are mutually illuminating.

The first group of sources is the accounts of the gospels, with emphasis on the Synoptic Gospels, where this incident is narrated. Among them, the longer Lukan version appears gradually to have become the Gethsemane scene par excellence. John's Gospel forms an exception to the narrative form of the other gospels with regard to this incident. Gethsemane is there an arrest scene only; in addition, Gethsemane is transformed and diffused in various contexts. Second, there are New Testament texts or traditions in which aspects of this narrative come into play, such as the Lord's Prayer, Heb 5:7–9, and possibly Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15; 2 Cor 12:7–9. These sources are primarily useful for constructing how Gethsemane was perceived or employed. Some of these passages are older than the gospel narratives. The Lord's Prayer especially seems already in Mark's version to have shaped the narrative. The Lord's Prayer and the Gethsemane scene are paired from our earliest available source on this incident. Due to the unique position of the Lord's Prayer, the Gethsemane scene was perpetuated on a continuous basis fairly widely, as it was attached to baptismal instruction from early on.[1] However, that particular prayer was also conducive to forgetting or downplaying the cup prayer and tended to favor a one-sided focus on the submission to the Father's will due to the insistence that "God's will be done."

The third group of sources is harmonies of the gospels. Harmonious readings rarely depended upon fixed gospel harmonies as *Diatessaron* did; it was much more commonly a matter of approach, of how to read and construct the incident. In such readings, there is a tendency for John to prevail. John emphasized the unity between Father and Son, a grid into which the Gethsemane incident, including a conflict of wills, does not easily fit. Harmonious readings of this scene served to place further emphasis on the second part of the prayer.

1 Sandnes, "The First Prayer," 210–11, 216–27; see Chapter 15 in this study.

The fourth group of sources is the Old Testament or, more precisely, how it came to be used. If the Old Testament was composed of detailed prophecies about Christ and his life, it followed that gaps might be filled in with such references. Since some of the key passages are in the first person, they were seen as a preexistent Christ talking about himself, thus giving access to a source that can be called autobiographical. Even in Mark we find the practice of drawing upon Old Testament passages in the interpretation of Gethsemane. In fact, Jesus' dictum on his distressed soul works like an autobiographical statement. In Justin Martyr we saw this coming into full flower with his use of Ps 22; other Old Testament passages were also of use to him. It is evident that with such a diversity of sources, the outcomes will be equally diverse.

The presentation will now be in accordance with some sliding scales on a continuum, whereby Jesus in Gethsemane is "graded." Since all observations are more or less about becoming and performing, it will be a matter of definitions and negotiations. It also follows that there is some overlap among the categories according to which my presentation is organized.

## 20.3 Biography, Example, Doctrine

The three words given in this heading are each indicative of key perspectives from which Jesus at Gethsemane was understood. Biography is not used in a sophisticated way as referring to a genre,[2] but simply to the fact that the passage in question claims to be about an incident in the life of a person and in any case is integral to how this incident was remembered. However, the gospels also see this incident as an example to be imitated by disciples, so it becomes instruction. Some later authors came to see it as a visual presentation of Christian doctrine, particularly Christology. Hence, the text became a demonstration, proof, or testimony. The three ways to look upon Gethsemane cannot be laid out as following upon each other chronologically or intellectually, proceeding from one to another, although the third perspective is somewhat later in appearance than the first two.

When emphasis was given to the biographical view, Jesus and his agony naturally came into focus. His being terrified at the prospect of death was integral to his life story. From that perspective, the cup prayer is legitimate, although it immediately becomes an issue to be negotiated, as already happens in Mark's Gospel. Jesus was seen to join the ranks of pious people who entrusted

2 For the question of genre, see Richard A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004).

themselves to God in situations of distress. In all the synoptic accounts, Jesus struggles to embrace God's will. Since this struggle necessary involved that Jesus' desire was for something else, this struggle is denied in the Fourth Gospel. The emphasis on the unity between Father and Son in John alienated that particular aspect from the Gethsemane tradition.

Even with the Second Gospel, the Gethsemane scene is remembered in a way that is "useful" (*chreia*) for Christian living. This literary genre from progymnastic exercises served the purpose of memory, but was also shaped by the relevance of remembrance. From that perspective, the disciples' role as recipients entered the interpretative process. Mark's figurative use of "falling asleep" and "staying awake" together with Jesus, who addressed himself directly to them (v. 38), strengthened the instructional perspective. This brought into focus the pairing of temptations and prayers (see below).

Construing Gethsemane in terms of relevance is no remarkable thing to do, due to the way that teachers' lives were perpetuated and remembered in antiquity.[3] Once Gethsemane, however, became a doctrinal proof text, a rhetorical example not only of how to live but also a proof of adhering to Christian doctrine, the biographical perspective becomes less important. Some sources, most clearly John Chrysostom, claimed that Jesus at Gethsemane acted out Christian truths. When the perspective moved from biography to example, proof text, and performance of doctrine, the cup prayer as a concern of Jesus about himself and his own fate faded into the background. The attitude taken to the Gethsemane scene gradually became a pool of arguments. This development is also due to the evolution of the notion of "Scripture," which tends not to leave biographical pieces of information as simply that. There is always some truth or present relevance to be evinced from a story that is canonically scriptural, or even nearly canonical.

The two interrelated issues of temptation and prayer come into play in this context. In the narrative Gethsemane, these two form a pairing in which the latter represents the proper response to be adopted in times of trials and temptations. Construed as a temptation, the agony in the garden is more than a personal crisis. Jesus struggled not only to embrace the divine will; he was also confronted with the devil. In Mark's Gospel, Gethsemane becomes the primary temptation scene. Luke considers the Gethsemane scene as the devil returning to tempt Jesus, as he had planned to do according to Luke 4:13. Luke brings this to bear on Gethsemane by moving this perspective to the forefront of his presentation. In this way, Gethsemane represents the culmination of what

3 A good example is the prologue to Lucian of Samosata's biography on Demonax; *Demon.* 1–2.

introduced Jesus' public ministry. By bringing the devil into the discourse on Gethsemane, the *agôn* motif is strengthened. The enemies confronting Jesus are not merely his own distress and fear, let alone God and his plan; he also had to cope with the devil himself.

Here the material investigated shows an apparent tension in the struggle with God's will and the devil. The devil is clearly the antagonist vis-a-vis God's will and plans (Mark 8:31–33parr). Resulting from this fact is that at Gethsemane the devil's will and Jesus' desire are on the same track, at least for a time. It is no wonder that we observed a tendency to think this through, and John obviously found it inimical if not contradictory to his image of Jesus. Macarius took the temptation theme in a very different direction. It was the devil who was tempted; Jesus only pretended to be weak and tempted, and Gethsemane was a setup to catch the devil. This leads us to consider the role of prayer.

Gethsemane is the only incident in the Synoptic Gospels where Jesus is portrayed in the act of prayer. Scripture reports that Jesus frequently withdrew to pray, but this is the only incident reported in which the prayer is rendered. It is therefore natural that this incident was particularly instructive with regard to prayer. The intimate relationship to the Pater Noster strengthened this significance further.

Some aspects of the story worked well as instruction on prayer in times of temptation. To John Chrysostom, Jesus' solitary prayer is implicitly connected with the instructions given in Matt 6,[4] thus demonstrating how the Gethsemane scene came to be seen as a lesson on prayer. Furthermore, Jesus' embracing of God's will, even when his own will was otherwise, is easily extracted as an example to imitate. Through the coincidence with the Lord's Prayer's "Your will be done," Jesus thus becomes the ideal pray-er in many sources. Jesus' persistence in prayer is pointed out especially by Mark and Matthew who have him pray more or less the same prayer three times. It is not surprising that this piece of information becomes useful for paraenetic purposes. However, Jung-Sik Cha is entirely correct in pointing out that "Jesus' prayer persistence in Gethsemane works in the negative side that makes the denouement of his fate look more tragic."[5] Jesus was persistent in prayer, but he was also persistent in seeking a way out of the imminent death, without ever finding it.

4 Chapter 17 of the present study.

5 Cha, "Confronting Death," 351.

## 20.4 Fearful versus Submissive and Obedient

Jesus is portrayed in agony, emotionally anguished and praying to have the cup pass from him. In so doing, he violated then-common ideals of the virtuous man: he acted out of fear and sought escape, which was tantamount to selfish cowardice or being womanish, like a soldier leaving his post. Furthermore, at the garden he showed himself to be inconsistent vis-a-vis the rest of his ministry. The Homeric cento of Eudocia is a reminder that ideals of masculinity were not necessarily incompatible with emotions, expressed both strongly and outwardly. In this way, the Homeric legacy brings to mind the righteous sufferer as well. Wailing from fear was by no means ideal in the Homeric setting; it is the losses that caused emotions to run high. Cries and tears were both appropriate to men when they served to stimulate warfare and avenging loss, as with Achilles. Leaving one's post was something very different.

In order to address questions or accusations that Jesus appeared "powerless, ignorant, recalcitrant, and passible,"[6] we must review the range of responses offered. The tradition of the righteous sufferer provided Mark with an answer. Jesus suffered physically from emotional stress, and spoke out of that situation in ways similar to the ideal sufferer in the Old Testament. People accusing Jesus of acting womanish and demonstrating cowardice might not have found references to this biblical tradition appropriate, but to Mark, it provided a model of powerless suffering and simultaneous piety and submissiveness. In this way the tradition about the righteous sufferer in the first part of the prayer paved the way for the second prayer where the orant puts trust in God alone.

With help of the tradition of the righteous sufferer, Mark's Gospel kept together the two parts of the prayer. The two are intertwined, although it made sense to speak of the cup prayer as distinct from the prayer about the will of God. Jesus, however, was never reported or recalled to have uttered the cup prayer on its own; it was always accompanied by another prayer. In Mark this accompaniment was still tenuous enough to emphasize their differences, while in Matthew's Gospel, the cup prayer is rephrased in a way that incorporated it into the submission prayer. Submission was put up front and thus conveyed the subordination of the cup prayer more clearly than in Mark. Matthew thus moved beyond the simultaneity of distress and prayer, which in Mark formed the basis on which it was possible to see the two prayers as somehow united. From Matthew on, submission dominates the interpretations. Matthew,

6 This is how Kevin Madigan, "Ancient and High-Medieval Interpretations of Jesus in Gethsemane: Some Reflections on Tradition and Continuity in Christian Thought," *HTR* 88 (1995): 157 summarizes how Mark and Matthew present Jesus in this text.

therefore, represents an independent witness of special interest. He did not simply reiterate what Mark had written. The process of refiguring Gethsemane, which in the New Testament finds its climax in John's Gospel, is already underway, if only in outline, in Matthew. The driving force in this process appears to have been the unity between Father and Son.

#### 20.4.1 *Martyrdom Theology*

The reception story uncovered has demonstrated that the precedence of the submission prayer over the cup prayer often led to negligence with regard to Jesus' desire to avoid the cup. This is particularly the case in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*. They are driven by the motif of the imitation of Christ, which almost exclusively refers to the submission, although the martyr context called upon prayers resembling the cup prayer in nature. We noted, for example, that Tertullian spoke of cup prayers in the plural in reference to such contexts. The "willing spirit" (Mark 14:38; Matt 26:41) naturally found a narrative correspondence in the second part of the prayer about embracing God's will. This paved the way for taking the first part of the prayer as indicative of the weak flesh, since Jesus' humanity was often seen to be on display there. Such readings were prompted by the way the prayer and Mark 14:38/Matt 26:41 were taken together. By combining the cup prayer with Jesus' admonition to stand up against the weak flesh, the cup prayer came to illustrate precisely that effort.[7] The story in its Markan and Matthean versions provided a "correction" within themselves against the cup prayer.

The tendency to downplay the first prayer may well have proceeded from this critique, which was implicitly there in the very fabric of this story. A paraenetically driven interpretation would by implication move easily from the prayer to the admonition. Although Tertullian does not distribute flesh and spirit to the two parts of the prayer, respectively, his words in *Mart*. 4 are worth quoting:

> From the saying of the Lord we know that "the flesh is weak, the spirit willing." Let us not, withal, take delusive comfort from the Lord's acknowledgement (*consensit*) of the weakness of the flesh. For precisely on this account he first declared the spirit willing, that He might show (*ostenderet*) which of the two might yield obedience to the spirit—the weaker to the stronger; the former thus from the latter getting strength.[8]

7 See below on Christology.

8 CCSL 1:6.10–15; ANF 3:694–95.

Tertullian's reference to Jesus' demonstration most likely has in mind his performance in Gethsemane, and the ground is thus prepared for theologies of martyrdom exclusive of the dimension included in the cup prayer.

Nonetheless, Tertullian's treatise *De Fuga in Persecutione* provides a more complex picture of martyrdom theology. We noted in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* that the second prayer was integral to the theology of imitating Christ that shaped the broader theology involved and that the first prayer was hardly mentioned. Tertullians' treatise brings some balance into this picture, surprising for a man who has earned a reputation for being harsh and uncompromising. First, he attests that the cup prayer was brought up in discussions on persecutions and martyrdom. In itself, that adds some important nuances to the picture rendered by *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*. The cup prayer must have been a constant reminder that martyrdom was not the only option. Tertullian finds cup prayers, like the one uttered by Jesus, to be legitimate as articulations of *propatheia*; they left the decision to God under the umbrella of submitting one's destiny to him. Although Tertullian does not speak explicitly in terms of *propatheia* and *patheia*, the way he distinguishes between legitimate and illegitimate prayers reads as a Christian adaptation of this philosophical legacy.

What bearing does this have on constructing Gethsemane discourses? This incident has been reported not merely as a part of Jesus' life but also as instruction to the disciples on staying awake. This story is a vivid example of the need to be vigilant in time of temptation; all synoptic versions bear witness to that. Furthermore, these stories demonstrate the role that incidents from Jesus' life were given in the instruction and formation of the believers, an observation in accordance with the rhetorical use of personal *exempla* more generally. This raises the question of how Jesus at prayer is to be understood vis-a-vis the theme of temptation. The passage reflects an instructional use, where the disciples' falling asleep represents a negative illustration and Jesus at prayer is the positive contrast to be imitated. The two work as contrasting examples because Jesus is also involved with temptation.

The biblical background resonating in the lament and distress bridges turmoil, crisis, temptation, piety, and example in a way that is distant from the Socratic legacy and protocols on masculinity that we have seen at play elsewhere in the Gethsemane discourse. Calmness, serenity, manly courage, and silence have given way to agony, prayer, and piety. Mark stages this scene in accordance with biblical legacies, not the legacy of the Athenian philosopher and the ideals according to which he was portrayed.

The mysterious and enigmatic character of this incident is not fully removed, since a contrast between this scene and the determination to face suffering and

death expressed elsewhere in the larger story still emerges, indicating that the larger story smoothed out tensions lingering within Jesus' heart throughout his ministry. The tradition of the righteous sufferer does not entirely remove the tensions felt between the narrative at large and the garden story in particular, but it does add coherence and consistency to the portrayal of Jesus within that particular scene.

## 20.5 Masculinity versus Effeminacy

The issue of manly courage has been present in this study from the outset. We have seen that early critics of Christianity drew on cultural sensibilities with regard to manliness and nobility. These sensibilities came into play especially in regard to how death was faced. Socrates held pride of place in embodying these ideals. In the pagan critique, these commonplaces loomed large and formed a backdrop against which Jesus was judged to be unmanly and a coward. Since these ideals held against how Jesus performed at Gethsemane represent cultural currencies in antiquity, their presence should not be limited to the sources in which they are explicitly voiced. It is time to address this more in detail.

Recent studies in ancient masculinity have demonstrated the interrelatedness of nobility and manliness.[9] The essentials of masculine courage were initially warfare, horses, and athletics. This Achilles-driven ideal, as Tat-siong Benny Liew labels it, was however gradually redefined into a Socrates-driven ideal.[10] While the first is characterized by domination, the other is known for self-mastery vis-a-vis the passions. Facing death courageously was equally important to both. At the other end of the grading scale was found δειλοί, cowards, lacking in virtues and effeminate in nature. Moral excellence and manliness are two sides of a coin; they interacted. This is, of course, the assumption behind physiognomy. To be sure, physiognomy was a disputed quasi-science

9 See for example the many articles on the topic found in *New Testament Masculinities* (ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson. Semeia Studies 45; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

10 Tat-siong Benny Liew, "Re-Mark-Able Masculinities: Jesus, the Son of Man, and the (Sad) Sum of Manhood?" in *New Testament Masculinities* (ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson. Semeia Studies 45; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 97, 107–109.

even in antiquity;[11] what matters here is that it affirms the important ideals of manliness and how that virtuous life manifested itself outwardly.

Socrates initiated a redefinition of masculinity in philosophical terms. An instructive example is Seneca the Younger's comparison of the Stoic life with the life of a gladiator: "The gladiator may lower his weapon and test the pity of the people; but you will never neither lower your weapon nor beg for life. You must die erect and unyielding (*recto tibi invictoque moriendum est*) ... And this will be afforded you by philosophy (*hanc tibi viam dabit philosophia*)" (*Ep.* 37.2–3).[12] Early Christian sources did not remove themselves from this masculinity discourse, as the present study has pointed out numerous times, but they negotiated it in accordance with their own beliefs. The excellence made visible in ancient ethical physiognomy, that which was manifested in behavior, was to them available in and through their faith.

### 20.5.1 *Negotiating Masculinity*

Mathew Kuefler in *The Manly Eunuch* (2001)[13] has argued that the success of Christianity in late antiquity was due partly to the development of a new masculinity: "Christian masculinity proved a winning idea in late antiquity. Based on the paradox of a reversal of expectations, Christian intellectuals managed to preserve the manliness of men's identity."[14] In a society finding itself on the verge of a crisis with regard to key factors in masculinity, such as declining militarism and collapsing structures of family and authority, Christianity offered a new masculine ideal based on its ideology. This resulted in dramatic changes with regard to serving as soldiers, family structures, sex lives, etc. Renunciation summed up a new manly ideal: "... men's flight from the military and from

11 Parsons, *Body and Character*, 34–36. Seneca addresses this in one of his moral epistles (*Ep.* 66). His critique takes the meeting of an old friend as a point of departure. Inside his weak and feeble body, the spirit was sturdy and firm: "For Nature acted unfairly when she gave him a poor domicile for so rare a soul; or perhaps it was because she wished to prove (*ostendere*) to us that an absolutely strong and happy mind can be hidden under any exterior" (1). Seneca here addresses the question of the signs so important in physiognomic theories. Fortune is simply too unreliable for judging people's ethical standing; money, position, and health are prone to change, says Seneca.

12 The example is given by Eric Thurman, "Looking for a Few Good Men: Mark and Masculinity," in *New Testament Masculinities* (ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson. Semeia Studies 45; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 143–44.

13 Mathew Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).

14 Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch*, 296.

public office, from marriage and the perpetuation of families and family life."[15] Some of the conclusions of Kuefler's book are sweeping generalizations; to take but one example, the question of serving in the army was more complex than what is gathered from his study. Nonetheless, it is helpful for having raised the question of Christians' redefining of masculinity. This approach is in principle what matters here: can Jesus in Gethsemane be seen as caught up in such a redefinition?

Jesus hardly complied with current ideals of hegemonic masculinity, but he nonetheless came out as a model or ideal in the way he submitted to his Father's will. Certainly, ideals are being negotiated here, but is a new masculine identity in the process of being cultivated? In what way have our findings contributed to that question? The challenge to cope with was that Jesus appeared as a coward when confronted with his death. In Mark and Matthew, he is affected by λύπη, asking for relief from the very purpose of his ministry. Luke has toned down the distress considerably, but kept the prayer to be dismissed, which, to be sure, was the most troubling part. This picture was a golden opportunity for critics and pagan polemicists. One way to respond was to shift emphasis to submissiveness or filial piety.

The present investigation has worked out the issue of consistency as crucial to manly courage and nobility. We have also seen that tested against this, Jesus comes out poorly, or at least apparently so. The altruistic perspective on Gethsemane, of course, bridges the gap between his commitment to death expressed elsewhere and his failure in Gethsemane. If his agony is nothing but an anticipation of Golgotha, there is no inconsistency (see below).

*A Feminist Companion to Mark* (2001) is a collection of essays summarizing new trends in readings of the Second Gospel. The perspective is primarily on how women figure in the stories. The Gethsemane scene occurs only occasionally in a couple of footnotes that do not pertain to the question of how gender ideals inform the passage under study. This situation changed a couple of years later with the appearance of *New Testament Masculinities* (2003), where the portrayal of Jesus, including his performance at Gethsemane, receives attention. In a groundbreaking study, Tat-siong Benny Liew argues that Jesus in Mark is portrayed in a way that meets contemporary masculine protocols. He is depicted as "sowing the field" (Mark 4), a motif corresponding to males' role in intercourse.[16] He gives to himself the role of "bridegroom" (Mark 2:18–20). Most importantly, Jesus engages in public conflicts, takes upon himself controversies, and participates in contests. In accordance with ideals of male

15 Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch*, 296.

16 Liew, "Re-Markable Masculinities," 101–102.

domination, Jesus is portrayed as "plundering" and "conquering" his enemy, the devil (Mark 3:22–27).[17] When it comes to Gethsemane, Liew's presentation lacks in transparency. On the one hand, he says that Jesus' prayer in solitude at Gethsemane proves:

> great determination and discipline … When the issue of death looms large and closer in his mind, he deals with it by facing it head on at Gethsemane (14:32–42). Once Jesus realizes the inevitability of his death, he accepts it and perhaps even encourages it. … Notice that Mark's Jesus himself actually demonstrates some of the "unmanly" fears and weaknesses that we see in the disciples. His fear, for example, is on clear display at Gethsemane. (14:32–36)[18]

Some of the sentences here are, in the light of what the present study has unfolded, not on target. On the other hand, Liew says that the Passion story brings a shift: "How is one supposed to reconcile the picture of Mark's Jesus as a man who competes and conquers and the one of him who competes but is confined, cornered, and finally crucified?"[19] Here Liew introduces the helpful notion of "competing ideologies of masculinity"; Mark is debating and reconfiguring masculinities, so it is appropriate to speak of masculinities in the plural.

I find Eric Thurman's contribution in the same volume helpful when he speaks about the "ambivalence" pronounced in Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane: "Here at Gethsemane, Jesus' sure-footed stride to Golgotha stutter-steps on the path of different desires."[20] This is also in line with how Moisés Mayordomo evaluates the Gethsemane scene from a masculinity perspective: "Damit kontrastiert allerdings die Gethsemane-Episode (14,32–42), die kaum mannhaften Mut und Ruhe angesichts des bevorstehenden Todes unterstreicht."[21] All these scholars imply that Mark is involved in some kind of redefinition of masculinity in the way Jesus is portrayed.

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17 Liew, "Re-Markable Masculinities," 105–107.

18 Liew, "Re-Markable Masculinities," 110–11 and 133. This citation, made up of two parts of his contribution, actually offers contradictory views with regard to Jesus and his distress.

19 Liew, "Re-Markable Masculinities," 107.

20 Thurman, "Looking for A Few Good Men," 150.

21 Moisés Mayordomo, "Jesu Männlichkeit im Markusevangelium: Eine Spurensuche," in *Doing Gender—Doing Religion: Fallstudien zur Intersektionalität in frühen Judentum, Christentum und Islam* (ed. Ute E. Eisen, Christine Gerber, and Angela Standhartinger, WUNT 302; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 371.

So how would Mark have answered Celsus or responded to similar accusations? What can be made out of his text seen against the backdrop of masculinity issues? In spite of Liew's somewhat confusing comments, it appears from the works noted above that manliness as power and hegemonic dominance is destabilized in Mark. Masculinity was constantly being negotiated, due to the cultural insistence that being manly was a matter of performance. Hence, it makes sense to speak of multiple masculinities. However, to consider Mark a negotiation on masculinity it is essential to identify some continuity with values associated with masculinity. From this it follows that it is a matter of shifting emphasis, offering replacements within given parameters and downplaying some aspects to give hegemonic position to others. It was simply essential to reason within given parameters; masculinity ideals were reinforced while simultaneously being deconstructed. The deconstructive part was not an idiosyncratic Christian reconfiguration. The way this happened was clearly bound up in the fact that courageous masculinity had already become a matter of dispute. What we see coming to life in this discourse is some kind of hybridity[22] in which there is a shifting of emphasis and disregard of other characteristics.

We have seen that Jesus' prayer accords with the most appreciated ideal in the Jesus story and his legacy, namely faith. Furthermore, against the backdrop of deep distress, Jesus submits to his Father's will and thus finally shows himself to be consistent; he accords with the purpose of his coming and the rest of his ministry. He demonstrates filial piety. In not giving in to the agony, his unselfish attitude stands out as all was done for the benefit of others. Mark 10:35–45 is a deeply relevant text where the wish of the two disciples to have honorary seats exemplifies hegemonic masculinity in analogy with manly rulers. Instead, Jesus portrays another ideal, that of servitude, taking himself and his death as a "ransom for many" as paradigmatic. Jesus' response in this passage centers on the metaphor of "drinking the cup," thus forming a clear link to the Gethsemane scene.

With reference to Greg Sterling, Candida R. Moss says that Jesus in Luke's story has been masculinized "through eradication of pain, fear, and emotion."[23] My exegesis has argued that Luke is more complex here, especially due to the inclusion of the prayer in 22:42a. That prayer runs contrary to what Socrates, Eleazar, the seven brothers, and Polycarp would even consider. Hence, the fact

22 This term is borrowed from post-colonialism, where it is used to describe the complex way of negotiating identity between colonizer and colonized.

23 Moss, "Nailing Down," 132.

that Jesus is not said to be distressed cannot without further exploration be added to masculine traits of the Lukan passage.

In the Fourth Gospel things are developed in a strikingly different way. Colleen M. Conway puts it as follows:

> Notably, the place where one might expect at least a momentary loss of control, the place where the Synoptic Jesus agonizes over his impending death (Mark 14 and parallels), the Johannine Jesus instead notes almost matter-of-factly that his "soul is troubled" (12:27). Far from expressing anguish, this Jesus faces death with the strength and courage of a super-hero. Indeed, in this equivalent to the Synoptic Gethsemane scene, Johannine Jesus nearly scoffs at the weakness of the Synoptic Jesus.[24]

Accordingly, a discourse on Gethsemane and masculinity in that Gospel has to be laid out differently. Agony and fear of death is present—more strongly than Conway admits—but there is silence with regard to escaping this moment. While the synoptic traditions articulate a struggle with regard to embracing God's will and plan, in John no such thing is found; on the contrary, it is denied as an option. The arrest in Gethsemane portrays Jesus as fully in control, complying with the dominant ideal of men, to be in charge and to dominate. Hence, a feminized Jesus is not really a problem in John's Gospel. John gives in his reconfigured Gethsemane a vision of masculinity in conformity with current ideals. According to Colleen M. Conway, "[m]uch of the evidence suggests that Jesus is presented as the manliest of men."[25] She argues that this is so since the peak of masculinity in antiquity was divinity.[26] This is argued with reference to how Philo portrays Moses, "... a piece of work beautiful and godlike" (*Mos*. 1.158).[27] Seneca portrays in his *Ep*. 115.3–4 a vision of virtue worth quoting:

24 Colleen M. Conway, "'Behold The Man!': Masculine Christology and the Fourth Gospel" in *New Testament Masculinities* (ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson. Semeia Studies 45; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 173; see also her *Behold the Man*, 143–57.

25 Conway, "Behold The Man!," 180.

26 Marguerite Deslauriers, "Aristotle on Andreia, Divine and Sub-Human Virtues," in *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity* (ed. Ralph M. Rosen and Ineke Sluiter; Mnemosyne 238; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 202–208 argues that *andreia* is not divine. Her argument is based primarily upon a philosophical notion of the deities; for a wider perspective, see Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 232–34.

27 Conway, "'Behold The Man!," 168–70.

> If we had the privilege of looking into a good man's soul (*animum boni viri*), oh what a fair, holy, magnificent, gracious, and shining face should we behold—radiant on the one side with justice and temperance, on another with bravery and wisdom! And, besides these, thriftiness, moderation, endurance, refinement, affability, and—though hard to believe—love of one's fellow-men, that Good (*bonum*) which is so rare in man, all these would be shedding their own glory over that soul. There, too, forethought combined with elegance and, resulting from these, a most excellent greatness of soul (the noblest of all virtues)—indeed what charm, O ye heavens, what authority and dignity would they contribute! What a wonderful combination of sweetness and power! No one could call such a face lovable without also calling it worshipful (*venerabilem*). If one might behold such a face, more exalted and more radiant than the mortal eye is wont to behold, would not one pause as if struck dumb by a visitation from above (*numinis occursu*), and utter a silent prayer, saying: "May it be lawful to have looked upon it!"? And then led on by encouraging kindliness of his expression, should we not bow down and worship (*adoret ac supplicet*) ...

Seneca draws heavily on physiognomic theories in this passage and depicts virtuous manliness on the verge of divinity. There are certainly points of convergence between virtuous masculinity and what makes Jesus appear as divine in this Gospel, but that question takes us far beyond Gethsemane, and it is equally certain that there are major obstacles to depict Jesus' divinity in the Fourth Gospels primarily as an extension of humanity, not to say of ideals of masculinity.

### 20.5.2 *Altruism and Masculinity*

As noted throughout this study, nobility and masculinity formed a twosome in ancient thinking. In the Seneca text cited above, we noted how closely the two are associated; that passage also emphasizes that unselfishness or altruism is essential for defining noble masculinity. This also finds affirmation in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*: "And those things are noble which it is possible for a man to possess after death rather than during his lifetime, for the latter involve more selfishness (τὸ γὰρ αὑτοῦ ἕνεκα); all acts done for the sake of others (τῶν ἄλλων ἕνεκα), for they are more disinterested; the success gained, not for oneself, but for others (περὶ ἄλλους) ..." (*Rhet.* 1.9.18–19/1367a).[28]

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28 That nobility is primarily manly is seen in the fact that Aristotle assumes that nobility may be achieved by women as well, but "virtues and actions are nobler when they

Jerome H. Neyrey has noted that nobility is often described in the semantic domain of καλός, as the opposite of shame rather than evil. Against this backdrop he addresses anew the Johannine dictum on Jesus as the "Good Shepherd" (John 10:11–18).[29] His contribution demonstrates how intimately connected courage, nobility, masculinity, voluntary death, and altruism are in this passage, and how together they place this passage firmly within discourses on dying courageously. According to "a common set of canons for a noble death" in the ancient world, dying for the benefit of others holds pride of place. Neyrey provides numerous examples, among which Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* expresses this iconically in 1368–1402. Hellas benefitted from her death and thus she become a "savior" to her people.[30]

According to John 10:11–18, the Good Shepherd lays down his life to save the flock (v. 11).[31] Furthermore, this is done voluntarily (vv. 17–19), which implies that he is in control in a way that brings to mind the arrest in Gethsemane (18:1–11). Accordingly, Jesus dies unconquered; he is not a victim. Neyrey demonstrates that dying "unconquered" implies the paradox of having "triumphed" despite dying, which paves the way for John's distinctive emphasis on Jesus' death as glorification.[32] The Good Shepherd's courage is contrasted with the cowardice and selfishness of the hireling (John 10:12–13); he flees in times of danger, opting to save himself instead.

Neyrey's work allows us to deduce two important observations relevant to the present study. First, the issue of courage and masculinity provides a framework in which Jesus' death is perceived in the Fourth Gospel, with dying for the benefit of others holding pride of place. As for Gethsemane, the Fourth Gospel found it disturbing to this picture, and it is therefore significantly transformed. Second, Neyrey's material helps us make sense of the way many Christian writers, including the Synoptic Gospels, dealt with Gethsemane by defining the

proceed from those who are naturally worthier, for instance from a man rather than from a woman" (*Rhet*. 1.9.21–22/1376a).

29 Neyrey, "The 'Noble Shepherd.'"

30 See Christina Eschner, *Gestorben und hingegeben 'für' die Sünder: Die griechische Konzeption des Unheil abwendenden Sterbens und deren paulinische Aufnahme für die Deutung des Todes Jesu Christi. Band 2: Darstellung und Auswertung des griechischen Quellenbefundes* (WMANT 122.2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2010) for the idea of dying for others. The question of nobility and courage is not her focus, however.

31 See also John 11:52; 12:23–24.32, where Jesus dies for the benefit of others. In the arrest scene this ideology becomes part of the narrative when Jesus sends away the disciples, a piece of information that also finds a soteriological interpretation and commentary (18:8–9).

32 Neyrey, "The 'Noble Shepherd,'" 274.

agony and cup prayer as altruistic in nature through connections to Golgotha.[33] The portrayal of Jesus in John's Gospel is thoroughly courageous, as he voluntarily faces death. The Gethsemane scene in the Synoptic Gospels is, of course, troubling to any claim on voluntariness, as the texts convey that Jesus' desire is otherwise than was his Father's, even in Luke's Gospel.

On the other hand, the aspect of overcoming comes through more strongly here than in John's Gospel. The fact that Jesus overcame the obstacles within himself turns the submission into courageous unselfishness. After this evolution, we conclude that the Synoptic Gospels do negotiate Gethsemane and masculinity, though with different strategies. What stands out is the fact that in Gethsemane, Jesus precisely embraced death for the benefit of others. This leads us to address the necessity of putting Gethsemane into context so as to get it right. This scene triggered theological creativity that drew on larger perspectives.[34]

Most importantly, the negotiation of ideals going on here is intimately associated with the larger perspectives from which Mark sees the scene. We pointed out the paradox that Jesus is denied what he himself offered others. This brings us to the altruistic nature of Gethsemane; his agony is for the benefit of others. We have seen that the Socratic legacy and Jewish and Christian martyr traditions understood their deaths to be for others. They were all, though in various ways, bringing benefit to others through their deaths. Jan Willem van Henten and Friedrich Avemarie have gathered selected texts to describe the legacy of dying nobly. In many of their examples, including those among the Greeks, dying for the benefit of others is essential.[35]

Stoic philosophy considered the four cardinal vices (ἐπιθυμία, φόβος, λύπη, ἡδονή) as inseparable, since all of them equally manifested the lack of a rational mind. The virtues (φρόνησις, σωφροσύνη, ἀνδρεία, δικαισύνη) are equally inseparable, so that "he who acts in accordance with one acts in accordance with them all."[36] It is, of course not by accident that in Latin, "man," "power," and "virtue" are etymologically related. Hence, it makes sense to see the virtuous man and masculinity as forming a unity. This makes masculinity generally relevant for discussions of virtues and vices. According to Arius Didymus, vices are characterized by disobedience to nature; vices embody hope for more than

33 See the paragraphs below on "Gethsemane Reversed."

34 See the paragraphs on "Putting Gethsemane in its Place" below.

35 Jan Willem van Henten and Friedrich Avemarie, *Martyrdom and Noble Death: Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Christian Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2002), 9–41.

36 Arius Didymus, *Epitome of Stoic Ethics*, 18–19.

what is assigned by Nature.[37] They are thus associated with different kinds of greed. Accordingly, distress (λύπη) is defined as envy (ζῆλος) or pain when good things occur to others that "you do not yourself get." We understand how firmly grief and distress are associated with selfishness. Seeking the benefit of others is precisely the opposite of the nature of the vices. Jesus' dying "for others" manifests him as not being envious, seeking his own benefit or pleasure at the cost of others. From that perspective, his agony exhibits manly courage. Mark finds a way around the apparent effeminacy in Jesus' agony and thus paves the way for this to become a dominant perspective on how to make sense of this scene. This is most vividly found in Jerome's remark that the drops of blood in Gethsemane in the longer Lukan version anticipated Jesus' crucifixion.[38]

We have witnessed a movement from the dominance of warlike Achilles to the self-mastery of Socrates, then to the submission of Jesus to his Father for the benefit of others. Jesus is not portrayed as by nature submissive; it is his relationship to his Father that is so described, and the submission proves that he is not selfish. Furthermore, his submissiveness was for the benefit of all, undertaken for the purpose of benefitting others by his filial piety.

## 20.6 Human versus Divine

This distinction that gradually became so crucial in disputes on early Christian Christology found in the agony of Jesus a shining example of his humanity. It came to be the text par excellence with regard to the human nature of Jesus, cited alongside other observations such as his hunger, thirst, fear, and sorrow. The weak, human nature of Jesus at Gethsemane comes through so clearly in the stories that it rapidly became a stumbling block to Christians of broadly gnostic sensibilities. They withdrew Christ from the scene, declaring his presence to be only apparent or left to others and not to Christ himself. This topic opens issues of immense consequence, beyond what the present study can address.

At Gethsemane Jesus came to be seen as a rhetorician at work, proving his case as well as living it. It was a performance of Christology, seen from the angle of Jesus' humanity. Jesus at Gethsemane came to serve a role not envisaged within any other New Testament passages pertaining to his humanity. When this passage facilitated Christological disputes, the fearful Jesus asking for a way out and the appearance of the term "flesh" naturally attracted

37 Arius Didymus, *Epitome of Stoic Ethics*, 56–63

38 Chapter 18.1 in the present study.

attention. The fact that Jesus said "My soul (ψυχή) is distressed" was laid out by Origen, Jerome, and John Chrysostom in accordance with Greek anthropology, where the polysemous ψυχή was taken to refer to humanity exclusively. It was Jesus' human nature rather than his divinity that was affected by fear and agony. It was his human nature that sought for escape and prayed that the cup might pass from him.

We have seen that Tertullian in his *De Fuga in Persecutione* also conceives of Gethsemane as a Christological act or demonstration,[39] but he says explicitly that both the human and divine natures were involved in Golgotha and equally affected by what happened. Tertullian finds himself in a debate on Christology and Gethsemane, but addresses it differently than Origen and Jerome.

Origen, Jerome, and Chrysostom shared a common belief with much of Greek philosophy, that divinity and ἀπάθεια were in principle incompatible. Even when Gethsemane is seen as a proof of humanity, the notion of equanimity is more or less an assumption since the agony and the first prayer so often was reserved for Jesus' humanity. Thus the Gethsemane scene was helpful as a Christological proof text, but when the issue of Christ's two natures is situated within the story itself, it causes confusion, or at least fails to clear it up. This demonstrates how coping with the text can bring not only solutions but also new tensions and contradictions due to altered contexts, situations, and questions. Gethsemane is gradually being involved in theological disputes and issues drawing primarily on other sources that have been imported into the interpretation of this scene. Sometimes the costs are considerable, if judged by the story of this incident itself. Gethsemane became a foil for issues raised primarily by the implications of the passage.

### 20.6.1 *In Need of Assistance?*

Julian the Emperor pointed out the embarrassing fact that Christ needed assistance from his inferiors. His argument demonstrated familiarity with Christian theology on Christ's participation in the creation and perhaps also with a passage like Heb 1–2 on Christ and the angels. Julian's observation came into play in discussions on Christology and trinity. According to Hilary of Poitiers (*De Trinitate* 10.36),[40] heretics made reference to Matt 26:38 (*tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem*). Hilary emphasized that the text does not say *propter mortem*, a translation conducive to heresy as he saw it, as it implied that Jesus was afraid "because of" the prospect of death. The cup prayer is explicitly said to be on behalf of human sins (*transire a se calicem rogat, utique iam secum*

39 Chapter 15.2 of the present study.

40 CCSL 62A:489.

*manentem, qui tum in sanguine novi testament pro multorum peccatis effundi consummabatur*, 10.37).[41] Hilary explicitly connects the cup prayer and the cup dictum from the last meal, thus proving how firmly Gethsemane is attached to the passion.

The cup prayer proved his human anxiety, says Hilary, but "does not lead to any distinction between Himself and the decree of the will that was united with Himself, and which he possessed in common with the Father" (*De Trinitate* 10.37).[42] He prayed not for himself (*non pro se praecari*, 10.37),[43] which he repeats in 37.41–42 (*non sibi tristis neque sibi orat*); neither was he sad about his own destiny, nor did he pray about himself. According to Hilary, the prayer is analogous with the intercession of Luke 22:31–32 ("I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail").

Hilary does admit that Jesus also prayed for himself, though the purpose was to make sure that he fulfilled his role in the plan of salvation. It was a prayer to find strength, thus emphasizing the unity between Son and Father and making the cup prayer just another version of the prayer about God's will. As though directing himself to Julian's view, Hilary says that the heretics should not take advantage of this by claiming that Jesus was feeble (*infirmum*) and needed to be strengthened by his inferior: "The Creator of the angels does not need to be defended by his own creature" (*De Trinitate* 10.41).[44] His argument is based on Luke 22:43, the authenticity of which he knew was disputed. Similarly, Jerome says with reference to the strengthening angel that Jesus did not need help from God (*auxilio Dei*) since he acted out of free will (*Pelag*. 2.16).[45] Jesus died voluntarily, and his anxiety and humanity are not in any way unsettling to the unity between Father and Son.

Hilary and Jerome demonstrate that both the cup prayer and the strengthening angel triggered theological discussions on the nature of Christ and his relationship to his Father. The Gethsemane scene became a catalyst for these burning issues in the early Church. These debates drew upon sentiments clear enough for pagan critics to observe as well. Both Hilary and Jerome make clear how steeped Gethsemane was in Christian doctrine when they wrote. Their readings of the text are an extension of Christian doctrine; hence other interpretations are necessarily false.

41 CCSL 62A:490.17–19.

42 CCSL 62A:490–91.21–25.

43 CCSL 62A:491.25.

44 CCSL 62A:494.8–9.

45 CCSL 80:75.23–25.

## 20.7 Putting Gethsemane in its Place

I noted above in the present chapter that the story of Gethsemane discourses is very much a matter of the larger perspectives in which they are embedded. Recognizing the need for realistic limitations, I began this project believing that it was, at least to some extent, possible to isolate the Gethsemane scene from larger narrative plots and connections. As the work progressed, I realized that this was simply impossible. In order to accommodate myself to the discourses in which Gethsemane was involved in the early church, the larger perspectives within which this story was told were nothing less than crucial. They were means whereby the embarrassing aspects of this scene were negotiated. Hence, narrative perspectives made their ways into the relevant parts of this study. This has been a challenge to the scope and limitations of the project, but for grasping Gethsemane as a discourse, it is inevitable and invaluable. The larger perspectives represent attempts to make appropriate sense of the incident.

Irenaeus charges his opponents with treating the biblical texts in a cento-like fashion.[46] His use of the cento analogy is helpful for defining the discourse at this point. The nature of a cento is to piece together passages without concern about wider contexts. Irenaeus' analogy therefore is tantamount to demanding consideration of the proper context, which for Irenaeus is more than the literary context or the Bible at large; it is *regula fidei* or the Christian faith or tradition as such.[47] Gethsemane must be interpreted according to this faith.

Pagan polemicists approached the incident with a view to cultural sensitivities. Ancient protocols of masculinity and courage were certainly a relevant context, but other perspectives also came into play. They included the question of Jesus' consistency vis-a-vis his life prior to Gethsemane, which means that they combined common standards of nobility with an insider's perspective. In the gospels themselves, they found that Gethsemane disturbed their coherence and by extension Jesus' trustworthiness. They grasped quickly the anti-textual nature of this scene within the narrative accounts of Jesus' life.

### 20.7.1 *Gethsemane: A Rehearsal of the Passion*

All narrative accounts of Gethsemane present this incident as the prelude to the Passion Narrative that culminated Jesus' ministry. Hence, God's plan becomes a framework within which this incident finds meaning. This is corroborated in the role given to God's will in all the synoptic versions, thus

46 Chapter 12.1 of the present study.

47 Sandnes, *The Gospel 'According to Homer and Virgil,'* 127–34.

taking us to the role of the second part of the prayer, where that aspect is made explicit. Nowhere does the first prayer appear alone; it is always followed by the second (see above). For some it serves largely as a prelude or a situation against which to understand the primary nature of the second prayer. Even in Mark and Matthew, the importance of God's will was pointed out; this was strengthened in Matthew as compared to Mark, and in Luke the prayer to have the cup pass from him was introduced by a reference to the will of God. Thus God's will or plan gradually came to envelop and color the entire scene. God's plan or will invites wider parameters drawn more generally from Christian theology.

The Synoptic Gospels unanimously report that Jesus was tempted twice, once as he embarked upon his ministry and again in Gethsemane. They include reports that Jesus frequently or according to his custom prayed to God in solitude. Furthermore, Heb 5:7 paints a picture that owes much to Gethsemane and has Jesus pray multiple times. These observations together make it likely that Joel Marcus is correct in assuming that Jesus struggled more than once with God in prayer.[48] That consideration serves to point out that narrating this episode as intimately connected to his arrest and passion is a deliberate choice that conveys important parameters for how to come to terms with it.

In the Synoptics, the cup prayer follows upon the cup dictum during Jesus' last meal with his disciples (Mark 14:23–24; Matt 26:27–28; Luke 22:20). The cup Jesus offered the disciples during that meal was for "the benefit of others." This altruistic aspect also provides a perspective when Jesus desires to have the cup pass from him. Even in Mark's Gospel we noted that the narrative paradox of Jesus being denied what he himself offered to those in need paved the way for altruistic interpretations of Gethsemane. Interpretations along these lines came to be dominant. Such interpretations also made sense within a discourse on courage and masculinity. By incorporating Gethsemane into the broader account of benefiting others, accusations of cowardice and effeminacy are rebutted or rendered petty.

According to Mark 14:41, Jesus summarizes the scene in Gethsemane by saying ἀπέχει: "God is absent."[49] This is easily connected with his cry on the cross (Mark 15:34): "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"[50] In different ways, the *Gospel of the Savior*, Jerome, and Hilary all took notice of this aspect and interpreted the Gethsemane prayer as intercession, as Jesus' praying

48 Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 976–77.

49 Chapter 5.7 of the present study.

50 See the paragraphs below on "Gethsemane Reversed."

for the benefit of others. Altruism unites the two incidents. We noted that this also formed a background for the great intercessionary prayer in John 17. Interpreting the prayer in this way is a variant of the altruistic perspective. Jerome made the connection between Gethsemane and Golgotha explicit in considering the drops of blood in Gethsemane to be a rehearsal of what was to take place on the cross. Golgotha fulfilled a Gethsemane prayer that was intercessionary in nature, not petitionary about Jesus himself and his needs.

### 20.7.2 *A Paradoxical Figure*

The Gethsemane scene is a constant reminder that Jesus was a puzzling figure. This puzzle found in Mark's Gospel a resolution in a narrative perspective whereby the anomaly of this story was implicitly explained. No salvation or rescue was available for Jesus, since his death was needed for the salvation of others. The disconnectedness of this particular scene within the larger narrative provided a key to unlock what Jesus' ministry was really about. Against the backdrop of Chapters 2, 3, and 4 in this investigation, it is clear not only that Jesus was seen as acting cowardly, but also would be seen to be self-centered. While Socrates, the Maccabean martyrs, and Polycarp, if in different ways, did not seek escape from their crises since they viewed their deaths as beneficial to their friends and peoples, Jesus was seen as clinging to his life. This contrast finds a paradoxical answer when Mark's Gospel is read narratively. God's omnipotence was not applicable to Jesus since others benefitted from his death. Hence, his grief and prayer were not failings but part of the passion drama. Jesus' being out of control became an aspect of God being in control, making sure that his plan of salvation was brought to its fulfillment. The fact that Jesus is denied what he offered to others makes the scene not at all self-centered, as ancient opponents alleged, but instead deeply altruistic. Thus a text with a potential to destabilize becomes exemplary thanks to the interpretation provided by Old Testament analogies, by larger narrative perspectives, and by exploring contemporary ideals of what it meant to be a man.

### 20.7.3 *Gethsemane Reversed*

Mark includes a scene of mockery while Jesus is on the cross (15:29–33). This scene is a flashback to the garden scene, particularly the cup prayer. The irony of the twice-stated "saving oneself" echoes how the cup prayer was seen by contemporaries. Seen through the eyes of Plato's *Crito*, "saving oneself" was precisely what Crito wanted his teacher to do and what was roundly criticized by the philosopher and his legacy. What Jesus articulated in the cup prayer becomes an impossibility on the cross. Furthermore, the passion scene picks

up on the question of consistency in Jesus' ministry. There was a certain anomaly within the garden scene in all the Synoptic Gospels since the cup prayer ran contrary to his being committed elsewhere. Those mocking him at the cross point out another inconsistency; the healing that he provided to others failed to materialize when it came to Jesus himself. This discrepancy, which looks like a flashback to the cup prayer, brings that particular prayer to its fulfillment, according to Mark. Answering the cup prayer is impossible due to the mission with which Jesus is entrusted. Thus the mockery scene brings together the paradoxical theology we saw at work in the Second Gospel. Furthermore, Jesus' cry on the cross (Mark 15:34) now follows immediately upon the reversed Gethsemane scene, thus adding credibility to Reinhard Feldmeier's interpretation of Mark 14:41.

Matthew develops this as a Gethsemane scene reversed even further (27:38–49). Two observations are worth noting. First, the mockery echoes the εἰ sentence of 26:42 ("My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done"), but the εἰ sentence of Matt 27:39 (cf. v. 42) questions the Father and Son relationship, which is supposed to be a firm conviction of Jesus in Gethsemane. This also applies to Matt 27:43 ("He trusts in God [πέποιθεν] let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, 'I am God's Son'"), which brings out the Gethsemane allusion more strongly and is nearly a quotation of the cup prayer: ῥυσάσθω corresponds to the cup prayer and εἰ θέλει echoes the other part of the prayer. The father-son relationship is included as well; πέποιθεν represents an interpretation of the Gethsemane scene as trust and submission. Furthermore, Matt 26:53, where Jesus says that he could appeal to his Father for salvation and help but that he refrains from doing so due to scriptural fulfillment, indicates that Gethsemane is being reversed in the passion scene.

From these observations suggestive of an intertextual link to Gethsemane, we proceed to a second observation, the cry on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (27:46). This cry is formulated in a way that brings to mind Gethsemane, since Matt 27:49 interprets Jesus' use of Ps 22:2 in terms of Elijah's coming "to save (σώσων) him." Luke develops this scene further (23:35–43); Jesus' inability to "save himself" is stated three times. The εἰ style is also used here (v. 35 and v. 39). Here this "if" style is about the messianic claim of Jesus. If he really was the Christ, he should be able to save himself or escape this end. Luke adds to this the dictum of the criminal crucified with him: "Remember me when you come into your kingdom" (v. 42). To this Jesus responds: "Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (v. 43). Thus the mockery that he saved others and should save himself is turned

into irony. This is precisely what takes place, and Gethsemane now finds its resolution.[51] In this way all three Synoptic Gospels prepare the ground for linking Gethsemane and Golgotha.

### 20.7.4 *The Righteous Sufferer*

Mark and Matthew undertake efforts to situate Jesus in Gethsemane in an Old Testament setting. Both the distress of Jesus and his prayer found resonance in the tradition of the righteous sufferer, who turned to God for help in such situations. The simultaneity of distress, prayer, and trust in that tradition provided an opportunity to make sense of Jesus in Gethsemane within a well-established tradition of piety.

### 20.7.5 *The Unity Between Father and Son*

In all the narrative accounts, the relationship between Jesus and his heavenly Father is crucial and the role of the Lord's Prayer in the Gethsemane traditions strengthens it further. We noted a movement towards a gradual emphasis on Jesus as submitting to his Father, most strongly expressed in Luke's Gospel. The Fourth Gospel makes this unity between Father and Son an independent topic that plays a substantial role in the overall story; John thus takes the ongoing negotiations over this scene in the synoptic tradition several steps further. The more this unity is emphasized, the less space remains for a scene involving a clash of wills and any consequent criticism of Jesus or his manliness. The Johannine emphasis on this unity has the power to deconstruct Gethsemane as it is known from the synoptic traditions.

## 20.8 Committed, Courageous, Cowardly?

As this study draws to an end, we return to the question indicated in its very title, reflecting three different viewpoints. There is a sliding scale between these positions, but they are all helpful in grasping the parameters important for the various discourses. The question indicated in the title evolves around two primary issues, that of fear or distress at the prospect of death, and the prayer. We address them in turn.

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51 The links here suggested between the two scenes are scarcely discussed in modern commentaries.

### 20.8.1 *Fear and Distress*

Five fundamental alternative positions on fear and distress have been identified in the material:

| **Cowardly/ Enslaved by desires** | **Fearful** | **Propatheia** | **Courageous** | **Unreal** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Celsus | Mark | Jerome | Luke? | Opponents of |
| | | Tertullian? | ____________ | Justin and |
| Julian | Matthew | | Socrates | Irenaeus |
| Anonymous | John | | Eleazar | Docetism |
| philosopher | Eudocia's | | Seven | The ideal of |
| | cento | | Maccabean | *Apatheia* |
| | ____________ | | brothers | Acting out |
| | Testament of | | Polycarp | instruction? |
| | Abraham | | Negotiated: | |
| | Greek tragedies | | Altruistic | |
| | | | interpretations | |

For obvious reasons, the question of the title cannot be answered in any other way than pointing to the discourse itself, since the answer depends entirely on the perspective taken. "Courageous" comes out rather poorly, However, if we take into account the redefined masculinity here, the altruistic interpretations rightly belong under this rubric. With some reservations I have labeled Luke's presentation of Jesus as courageous as it relates to Jesus' fear. No λύπη is mentioned; it is not reported that he was afraid, although the prayer in verse 42a and terminology in verse 41 do appear to imply that conclusion. The category *propatheia* demonstrates the degree to which philosophically minded Christians found themselves uncomfortable with the troubled Jesus. The fifth category implies denial of some kind. It is obvious that the opponents of Justin and Irenaeus, although we lack their own presentations, must be included here. However, I have also populated this category with those who would protest against finding themselves where I have placed them. The reason for doing this is to draw attention to some of the forces at work here, even in figures who do not share the fundamental assumption of an elusive Christ or Gethsemane.

Portraying Jesus in accordance with *apatheia* is of necessity a step towards depicting him as unaffected. Whether the problem of Jesus' troubled mind is explained as *apatheia* or as only apparent makes little difference to the fact that both views engage in distancing Jesus from his distress. The idea that *apatheia* and divinity are in principle contrasts paved the way for the elusive Gethsemane, which we saw in some sources was influenced by gnostic or docetic ideas. The same notion is at work, however, when so-called orthodox theologians reserved the cup prayer for the human Jesus, with whom divinity could not be involved.

Furthermore, when Gethsemane is construed as pedagogy, as a demonstrated instruction or lesson given to *others*, this may likewise be a step towards disentangling Jesus from distress. Whether it was real for him or not is of less importance, because his involvement is primarily that of an instructor. My reasoning may be illustrated with John Chrysostom. He takes Jesus in Gethsemane to demonstrate both instruction and Christology; hence the agony is a proof of his humanity. There can be no doubt that this emphasis is a reason in itself for keeping Chrysostom away from this category. Nonetheless, with regard to the prayer that follows upon the fear, Chrysostom, with reference to John's Gospel, questions whether the prayer was only contemplated. Chrysostom becomes here a victim of own his harmonious reading of the four gospels. His deliberation is revealing of some important forces at work in the discourse, one of which is the fundamental question of how real this event may or may not have been. The concern behind that issue is the question of *apatheia* and divinity. The fact that the *Gospel of the Savior* makes this scene a heavenly vision makes it a natural fit for this category.

### 20.8.2 *The Prayer*

As for the prayer, there is also a sliding scale from the prayer to have the cup pass from him to the submission to God's will or plan. Four strategies are at work here. First, the critics isolated the cup prayer and made it, together with the distress, their point of departure. Jesus in that view complied with the stereotype of a coward, someone seeking escape for selfish motives, being distressed and not able to face death in a manner corresponding to the ideals he had held before its impending arrival. This contributed to the portrayal of an effeminate coward inconsistent with his own self-depiction.

Second, how the relationship between the two parts of the prayer is clarified is nothing less than crucial. The cup prayer never appears on its own, apart from the submission. Furthermore, we noted that the emphasis shifted gradually to the submission element. That part marked the perspective on the prayer

already visible in Mark's Gospel. Matthew reframed the case further in that direction, Luke even more strongly so. This process culminated in John's complete denial of the cup prayer. He does not merely leave it out but renders it impossible to imagine.

Third, the question of reality is raised by Christians of a docetic bent, thereby making not only Jesus' distress but also his prayer elusive. As stated above with regard to fear, responses inspired by *apatheia* also belong here. Clement of Alexandria never brought Jesus' Gethsemane prayer and *apatheia* together in his treatise on prayer. Nevertheless, the fact that prayers aimed at the fulfillment of some personal wish amounted to egoism is indeed relevant. In that light the cup prayer can hardly be legitimate.

Fourth, the prayer was intercessory; it was not really about Jesus but aimed at the benefit of others. While the critics saw in the cup prayer a coward, insiders insisted on focusing on the second part of the prayer, paving the way for various interpretations, one of which was that Jesus was courageous. He did not act out of selfishness but embraced God's will for the benefit of others. To pray in an intercessionary rather than a petitionary fashion marked Jesus as thoroughly consistent with what was beneficial to others. This interpretation found support in reading Gethsemane together with other instances of his praying for others.

## 20.9 Condensed Summary

### 20.9.1 *Initial Problem*

The tradition about Jesus at Gethsemane came with an inherent problem. Even in Mark, possibly the oldest Gospel, this episode runs contrary to the rest of the story and is thus an anti-text. This impression gains strength through the other gospels, particularly in John where the episode is not even related. This insider perspective corresponded to challenges raised by pagan critics, who also drew upon cultural sentiments on manly courage and consistency. At Gethsemane Jesus expressed neither daring nor perseverance. His distress at the prospect of dying shows him to be a coward lacking in understanding; worse is that he seeks to be dismissed from his assigned post. The history of the interpretation of this incident in Jesus' life became a process whereby this criticism was negotiated.

### 20.9.2 *Solutions*

A plethora of ways to come to terms with Gethsemane has been observed, a process initiated by Mark's Gospel. We may distinguish between three main

categories of solutions. Some Christians found it incompatible with their view on Christ that he performed so poorly in the garden. Their rejection of his bodily suffering also affected the way they came to view Gethsemane. The garden scene was either a heavenly vision or Christ was not really present. In ways pertaining to a docetic understanding of Christ, his presence at Gethsemane was elusive, if he was there at all. Strategies to distance Jesus from this part of his life dominated this view.

Others called this first group heretics, but shared the view that, to understand Gethsemane, it was crucial to explore how it was connected to Golgotha. In various ways they all conceived of Gethsemane as a rehearsal of the passion, so the relationship between the two parts of the garden prayer was essential. The cup prayer was altered from being a real petition in which Jesus hoped for God through his omnipotence to find a way out for Jesus to becoming only the context or circumstance for the second, infinitely more important, prayer on God's will. Golgotha reversed Gethsemane in becoming its fulfillment. At the cross Jesus is mocked for not "saving himself." This puts the cup prayer right and enrolls it in the catalogue of Jesus' sufferings for the benefit of others. Accordingly, his prayer was by some seen as intercession in principle.

This story about Jesus himself was, from the beginning of its remembrance, seen as an example in terms of temptation and perseverance, submission and prayer. For the story to work that way, the second part of the prayer must be elevated over the first. The story gradually also became a pool of doctrinal truths, particularly on Christology. The accounts of Jesus at Gethsemane were proof-texts for his humanity.

### 20.9.3 *Remaining Problems?*

This has been a historical investigation, not a normative exercise in how Gethsemane should be interpreted. Nonetheless, along the way some problems have become apparent, especially when seen against the backdrop of the narrative accounts themselves. By placing Gethsemane within larger theological perspectives, many interpretations certainly go beyond these accounts, but that is a fascinating exercise to observe. The two main problems I have in mind come into view when the solutions offered run contrary to the accounts and import issues alien to them. To point that out is the final task of a study aimed at reconstructing the discourses on Gethsemane, as has been addressed when appropriate throughout the study.

The role of *apatheia* for our investigation has been important. Equanimity as an ideal is fundamentally alien to the narrative accounts of Gethsemane, even Luke's versions. Gethsemane does not fit easily into a concept where petitions are disguised as egoism, an issue in Clement of Alexandria's treatment.

It has been valuable to note how the ideal of *apatheia* has also informed Christian writers who consider Gethsemane to prove the humanity of Jesus. His humanity is emphasized but to the exclusion of his divine nature, since divinity cannot be as passionate as Jesus is in the garden. The ideal of *apatheia* has the effect that Gethsemane never really comes to a comfortable interpretative locus in early Christianity.

The other main problem comes into view when the role of these accounts as Christological proof texts is combined with the admonition that the willing spirit is opposed by the weak flesh. The dicta of Mark 14:38 and Matt 26:41, identified as *chreia* here, certainly paved the way for considering this scene an example to be imitated by disciples. The contrast between the willing spirit and weak flesh brings to mind Paul's categories in his paraenesis. The disciples and Jesus are contrasting illustrations in this *chreia* and the instruction that followed from this scene. Hence, the disciples were urged to stay awake and not fall asleep. Jesus likewise stood up against the temptation to flee the situation, instead embracing his Father's will. This interpretation can be traced all the way back to Mark's Gospel. A problem arises, however, when this interpretation is attached to a doctrinal approach whereby the cup prayer is used as a proof of humanity. Then Jesus' being affected by Adam or Mary becomes something in need of being mastered or confronted. Viewing incarnation from the perspective of *propatheia* would of course solve that problem, but it would also impose a distance between Jesus and his humanity that goes beyond the idea often expressed in our sources, that Jesus' humanity was nearly complete and exempt only from sin. In spite of the attempts to come to terms with this aspect of Jesus' life, the incident at the garden of Gethsemane remained a conundrum. Sophisticated interpretations aimed at resolving it have imported new challenges while solving inherited problems.

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